

## The Odyssey – Chapter 6

"And under the Bush administration, they said we might make a first strike, IIRC."

"They pulled out all of the stops when the issue of Iran came up."

"This could be all over before it really gets started."

"Don't count on it."

Two central factors drive the shift toward a preemptive policy against the threat of terrorism and WMD. The first is the realization since Sept. 11 of US vulnerability to thousands of terrorists trained and willing to carry out attacks against Americans. The other is the recognition that time is evaporating for Washington to act against another, old, long-anticipated threat - chemical, biological, and, most critically, nuclear weapons programs carried out by "rogue" states such as Iraq, Iran, and North Korea. "Time is not in our favor," the Pentagon official says. "There is a sense of urgency because of the Iraqi program, among others.

"The Iranian program is moving along in dangerous ways, and this administration has always been nervous about North Korea and whether its nuclear weapons program is completely constrained by the 1994 agreement." Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, before the Senate Armed Services Committee Feb. 5, 2002 advocated the expansion of the Bush anti-terror doctrine to include preemptive strikes. When the issue of Iran enriching uranium in 2006 made it to the UN, Bush said that all options were on the table.

"Do you really believe the first Latino President would use nukes against México?"

"I think that depends on their assessment of how much China and Russia are involved in México's internal politics."

"If they're very involved, they could retaliate if we nuked México."

"Only Russia, I don't believe the government of Taiwan had nukes."

"Maybe not, but after the President failed to honor that treaty and the PRC overran Taiwan, I don't think you can really count on them being our ally."

"Putin went out shortly after Bush and Blair. I heard the new guy they got was an old line communist."

"Didn't they get a new government that called for elections?"

"Yes they did, but who knows what went on over there after the war?"

"The Nationalist Chinese aren't Communist."

"They're capitalists; I don't think there is anything worse than tight fisted businessmen. It's one hell of a combination, a Country who wants to own the world in bed with a Country that wants to rule the world."

"Careful, you could be describing us."

"Our only problem is that most of the recent Presidents thought they were Teddy Roosevelt and wanted to 'Bully' everyone."

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For several days it was like being on a movie set waiting for the Director to say, "Action." The mortars were set up and registered so that they could cover the most likely place a pontoon bridge could go in. We dressed some of the Tejanos up in customary Mexican clothing and sent them across the river to scout out the Mexican Army. They reported back that we were up against what they concluded was probably a couple of Companies. Prior to 1987, most conscripts into the Mexican Army drilled on weekends but never really had formal military training. Our Tejanos said these people looked to be well trained soldiers and each Company had about 3 Platoons. They were about 50 miles south and headed our way. We figured had maybe 2-3 hours before they got here, close to sunset. Although we were using horses, the scouts used Honda bikes.

"Do you think they'll try and construct a pontoon bridge at night?"

"If I was in charge, I would. That would let me roll my troops across the river at dawn."

"How do we handle it?"

"We'll use harassing fire using our new mortars. Plus we can put up an illumination round and cut them down with the machine guns."

"I wish we had the Air Force here," Hank grouched, "One B61 would take out both Companies."

"Custer probably wished he had his Gatling guns, Hank. We have 4 mortars and 8 Grenadiers; we can lay down enough fire to keep them from constructing the bridge."

"Y'all remember to aim low, we're shooting downhill and shooting on an incline always makes the bullets hit high."

"Why is that?" Juan asked. "I think they'll hit low if you shoot uphill."

"In urban or mountainous terrain, snipers must be concerned with shooting at angles over areas that are not level. Whether shooting from an angle above or below the tar-

get, the sniper's round will impact above the point of aim. The distance is the same for both downward and upward inclines. The distance the bullet travels is further than the gravity affecting it."

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Meanwhile, the US military had mobilized and was moving into place blocking ports of entry from México into the US. They had Tank Companies at all bridge crossings and strung out along the New Mexican and Arizonan borders. They were using Apache Longbows with newer generation Hellfire missiles to take out the tanks the Mexican Army had acquired from the Nationalist Chinese. Most of the Mexican Army was dismounted Infantry. The Marines had both F-35B and F/A-18F models at Yuma. Some of the old Harrier's hadn't been retired, either. Holloman had the F-117s and Luke had F-35As. The remaining F-15E Strike Eagles and 2 Squadrons of F-22s from Tyndall AFB were moved to Texas, New Mexico and Arizona. It mattered little whether the F-22s or F-35s could carry B61s, we had Strike Eagles and F/A-18s.

In the summer of 2021, the US inventory of tactical nuclear weapons numbered 1,290. They were the B61-10 bombs typically delivered by fighter aircraft. If México had any nukes, they must have gotten them from Russia. When México invaded the US, they broke an agreement with Russia, forcing Russia to bow out or feel the full retaliatory effect of our Ohio class submarines. At DEFCON 2, there weren't any ships or boats in any ports.

The scouts hadn't been back more than an hour when the sun exploded about 30 miles south of us. Shortly after, a Park Ranger appeared carrying a survey meter. While the wind was out of the west, he instructed us to move out at the first sign of any radiation. In either direction along the border, for as far as we could see, there was an occasional mushroom cloud.

"He has a big pair," Gunny laughed. "I'll wager that they set the yields on those weapons according to the size of the unit they were up against."

"We're getting a little radiation, Gunny, it's time to move."

"What was that, and what did the Ranger want?"

"It was a nuclear weapon, honey. The Ranger brought us a survey meter and we're getting a little radiation."

"I've got  $KIO_3$  in my medical supplies."

"Pass 'em out while we break camp. I suppose you never leave home without them?"

"Next time I get the wild idea to take a vacation, shoot me, please? How far are we going?"

"Home sounds good, I'll have to call Jason and tell him to come get us."

"What about the Tejanos?"

"Juan, Manny, we're going back home to Kansas, do any of you want a job?"

"Farming?"

"Yep, horse farming."

"Do you pay well?"

"Housing, food, an education for your kids and \$6 an hour."

"Any Latinos in Kansas?"

"25% of our hometown and 50% of the largest adjoining town."

"Any other work up there?"

"There's a packing plant in Garden City."

"Where are we going at the moment?"

"The Ten Bits Ranch, can you fellas herd the remuda?"

"Si."

It was late in the day to be moving, but the radiation couldn't tell time, leaving us little choice. It took us the better part of 6 hours to make it up to the Park Headquarters at Panther Junction. The next morning we started early and made it the 26 miles to Maverick Junction. We weren't reading any radiation and thought we were in the clear. One more day and we'd be back to Ten Bits Ranch where Jason should be waiting. When we arrived at the west Park entrance, it was blocked. The people were being held back by about 12 Rangers and 3 Deputies from the Brewster County Sheriff's office.

"What's this all about Ranger?"

"We have this bunch and another at the east entrance trying to seize the Park in name of the Nation of Aztlán."

"Why don't you just move them out?"

"They're pretty well armed, mostly G-3 rifles and a few M16s."

"We can probably move them if you what them cleared."

"How can you do that?"

"We're not without resources, if the Deputies can swear us in as a posse, we'll move them for you."

"I'll ask."

"Well if it isn't the Deputies from Kansas, we figured you left by now."

"We were going to but this group of Tejanos asked for our help. Did the Ranger explain what we wanted?"

"Yes, and the Sheriff said to swear you in only if I were confident that you could pull it off. Care to explain how you intend to do that, you're out numbered about 3 to 1?"

"What do they have, battle rifles and assault weapons?"

"Those and some handguns."

"Did you see anything else, like grenades or heavy weapons?"

"No."

"In that case, care to check our selection of weapons?"

"Jesus H. Christ, machine guns?"

"A pair of .50 cal's, 4 M240s and 8 M249s. We have 8 M16s equipped with M203s plus 4 60mm mortars. The majority of our rifles are M1As or G-3. The ladies are equipped with M16s."

"Well I guess you have the equipment, but do you know how to use it?"

"Tom and I were Command Sergeant Majors; Gunny was a Master Gunnery Sergeant and Hank a Marine Master Sergeant. Collectively, we served for 108 years. What do you think?"

"I think I'll call the Sheriff back and tell him to send ambulances."

"You're mainly going to need hearses, Deputy, as a matter of policy, no quarter will be given. Gunny, do you and Hank want to disperse our forces?"

"You damn right, it's about time we got to use these weapons."

"I couldn't reach the Sheriff, so you can temporarily consider yourselves to be sworn Texas peace officers."

"Clear on the left."

"Clear on the right."

"Fire."

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"How many survivors, Gunny?"

"Before or after we checked?"

"How did we make out?"

"We have 3 with serious wounds, about 7 with minor wounds and 2 dead. June and Marilyn have them triaged and are working on the most seriously wounded first."

"How many did we kill?"

"Just short of 160, either 157 or 158."

"Any family members?"

"None dead, but Don has a serious wound and John and Jim minor wounds."

"How much longer for the ambulances?"

"Maybe 40 minutes."

"I guess we'd better let Jason know we won't make it today."

"The Deputy says they're bringing in a Texas National Guard unit to deal with those people at the east entrance."

"Anything else?"

"The Mexican Army, or what's left of it, is in full retreat. We shot down all of their shiny new fighters and lost 7 of our own. At the moment, the score is US-1, México-0."

"What about the illegal immigrants?"

"Can't tell you much, but apparently they aren't giving up without a struggle"

"Did you reach Jason?"

"They're on their way."

"Ok, fellas decision time, do you want to stay here and fight or do you want to come to Kansas with us?"

"We talked over and we're going to stay."

"We can leave you the .30 caliber ammo and most of the food supplies, will that do?"

"Yes, thank you."

"Do you want those tents we bought?"

"What will you do for transportation?"

"To the victor belong the spoils, we'll take the stuff those NOA people had."

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When the Sheriff arrived, our injured were transferred by ambulance to Alpine. Jason unloaded our pickups, trailers and horse trailers and loaded up the stock and equipment. The Sheriff indicated there'd be an inquiry and we told him we'd be staying in Alpine until our injured could travel anyway. He said they were being treated at Big Bend Regional Medical Center. The military equipment, with the exception of our personal weapons, was returned to Kansas along with our other things.

When we arrived at Alpine, we seemed to attract a lot of attention, perhaps because much of the population of the area was of Hispanic heritage. We decided we'd be well served to wear our weapons, open carry, of course. Both sides of the issue, Tejanos and NOA were well represented. The inquiry ruled the deaths as justifiable homicide, seeming an unpleasant outcome for several members of the community. As soon as the medical staff said the boys could travel, we rented an aircraft to fly them back home and departed very late one evening.

Avoiding the major cities, we followed a meandering course back to Kansas, arriving 4 days later. Don was in the hospital in Garden City and the others had been released and sent home. The day after we arrived, the Sheriff drove up and demanded all 8 of our reserve Deputy badges. Dan and Jeremy kept theirs as did Don, Ray, Jim and John. We were just in time for the 4th of July celebration. In retrospect, it had been a fun vacation right up until the last. We four old soldiers decided we'd limit our fishing to the local area from now on.

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"I don't know about you Dan, but I've had about all the fun I can stand. I'll settle for a very peaceful quiet life from now on."

"I hope so Gunny. We did attract a bit of unneeded attention with this last thing, though. I'm thinking we should get a hold of Big Jake and move a few things until the furor dies down."

"What things?"

"The bourbon barrels, the stills and all of our automatic weapons."

"Why?"

"That Sheriff in Brewster County said we'd managed to get the attention of the BATF."

"The ammo too, or just the weapons?"

"We'll have to move the AP, that's illegal in civilian hands and we aren't Reserve Deputies any longer."

"What a crock."

"We'll keep the anhydrous ethanol, and slap a poison label on it. This will all die down; they're going to be busy along the border trying to seize those automatic weapons."

"That's a lot of stuff to move."

"I thought we might buy a used semi-trailer and use it as storage. We wouldn't have to unload anything until we brought it back home."

"You'd better re-think that, the bourbon evaporates and that would turn the trailer into a time bomb."

"We can install a fan to vent it."

"They teach you that in the Army?"

"Teach what?"

"Having an answer for every question."

"I've been talking to June; most of this was her idea. She told Jason to find us a used tractor and trailer and if nothing else, we can just keep the stuff on the move until this all dies down."

"That probably won't do your bourbon any good."



"Can't be helped. I'm worried that Jim will over react when they do show up."

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"Mom told me that she expects the ATF to show up, Julia."

"Now don't you go and get hot headed and do something you'll regret."

"I realized down in Texas, that I've pretty much gotten over that. They had some trouble with a Park Ranger and they called me, but I wasn't interested."

"Does that go for FEMA, too?"

"I wouldn't go that far, honey. What they did was clearly unconstitutional. If you ask me, we have way too many laws on the books. The only ones of us that can keep our M16s are the one who are Reserve or actual Deputies. She's going to buy a tractor-trailer rig and load up all the stuff the AFT enforces and move it off the farms for the interim."

"Is the trouble with México over?"

"With México, yes, we nuked them. The trouble with the illegals still isn't resolved. The Sheriff down in Texas said that new estimates put them at 25 million."

"We have a large Latino population in the area, will that be a problem?"

"I don't believe so; most of them are skilled or semi-skilled laborers who work for Tyson."

"Dan invited those Tejanos we were working with to come here. I think the only reason they said no was because the problems aren't over. Perhaps, when they are, we'll have 3 dozen new Tejano families here on the farms."

"How is your wound doing?"

"It's just a scratch. Mom says she's going to take the bandage off in a few days and let it finish healing."

"Mary said John already had his bandage off, how is Don doing?"

"He's going to be laid up for a while, but Mom says he'll heal up just fine. The operated and got out the bullet fragments and other than a long healing process, he should be ok. I was looking at the crops and gardens; it appears we're going to have a good year."

"They delivered the jars and bottles and Jason picked up the used jars in Lakin and Garden City. We started canning a while back and I sure we're going to exceed the

amount of food we produced last year. Mary and Sandy are doing the canning and Susan and I are covering the gardens."

"I see that Jason is using the tractors this year."

"He said we were too short handed to use horses. Beside, you had 50 head of the Clydesdales down in Texas. You haven't really explained what happened down there."

"We were set up to intercept 2 Companies of Mexican infantry and someone, probably the Air Force, nuked them. We broke camp and headed back to that dude ranch so Jason could pick us up and bring us home. When we got to the Park's west entrance, there was a group of NOA activists trying to gain entrance to the Park. Those old war horses offered to help if the Brewster County Sheriff would temporarily deputize us as a posse. He did, eventually, and we set up the machineguns. It was over in a few minutes, all they had were rifles."

"You just gunned them down?"

"It wasn't like that, they fired first."

"And then you just mowed them down?"

"Yep."

I could see that the idea of us shooting those people bothered her. Truth be told, it bothered me too. They didn't disperse when the Ranger's gave them that last warning and instead opened fire. After that, we were too busy returning fire to worry about whether or not what we were doing was morally justified. Those Tejanos went through their ranks and made sure none of the NOA people survived.

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"What would you like for supper, Dan?"

"How about grilled cheese sandwiches and tomato soup?"

"Well ok, I was thinking of making chili."

"My stomach still hasn't healed up from that chili we were eating down in Texas."

## The Odyssey – Chapter 7

"Their wives were adding a few habaneros."

"That explains it; those are as hot as Scotch bonnet peppers. I don't think I've ever eaten chili as hot as they made."

"I don't believe I want to take another vacation for a while. We were followed by bad guys who turned out to be the good guys, saw a nuclear weapon up close and personal and then had the firefight to end all firefights. I think it's time to just stay home."

"No more odysseys, huh?"

"I have half a mind to sell the tent trailer. I'm not so sure I like those holsters we bought in Laredo either."

"I thought they were designed for the woman shooter."

"How about we call down there and get a pair of the Laredoan cross draw rigs and we can each carry a long barreled revolver and one with the 5½" barrel?"

"Would you rather have a 4¾" barrel?"

"Can you get them?"

"Sure, same source and just have him ship them to Garden City."

"It would be more my size."

"Good then we'll have single action revolvers in all 3 barrel lengths. We can still use a single gun when we want and use the old holsters."

"What do you carry for a backup?"

"I don't carry one, why?"

"Pick up a Chief's Special model 360P, with the optional Crimson Trace grip, they're very small and I have speed loaders for those."

"A .357 magnum?"

"Yes, they have the power of the .45 Colt and with the Gold Dot short barrel bullets you can stop anyone not wearing a vest."

"I don't know that USP Tactical carries 12 rounds."

"And weighs a ton. Fine, then you get me a Tactical with a suppressor."

"Where did this one come from?"

"Tulsa, Oklahoma. They bought them from a fella named John Doe. If you find him, tell him you were referred by Manny, Moe and Jack Smith. The purchases weren't exactly legal. You'd better take one of your sons with you; Doe is very friendly to law enforcement."

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Find John Doe in Tulsa, Oklahoma and buy an H&K gun from him and a suppressor. I suppose I could put an ad in the paper asking John Doe to contact Manny, Moe and Jack Smith at the Holiday Inn. The problem was I didn't know the secret handshake. It wasn't that hard to find the store, there was only one authorized dealer in Oklahoma and the store was in Tulsa. Jeremy was with me; I took June's advice and brought a cop. I talked Jeremy in to doing the talking. He was to flash the badge and say that Manny, Moe and Jack Smith referred him to John Doe. I was embarrassed just being there and listening to Jeremy asking for John Doe. He picked out an older fella and flashed the badge before he said, "I'm looking for..."

"John Doe? Referred by Manny, Moe and Jack? A long while back I had 3 fellas in here from Kansas, do you know them?"

"I know who they were, they're dead."

"You don't say. What happened to them?"

"They were killed by FEMA in the Kearny County..."

"Massacre. I sold them H&K USP Tactical's in .45 ACP with those Knight Armament suppressors. What can I do for you Deputy?"

"I want to introduce my father; he married to Manny's widow. She wants the same thing."

"Don't suppose you're a Deputy?"

"Not any more, I'm too old," I explained. "June wants me to get an S&W model 360P, but I like the Tactical of Randy's and insisted on carrying it. She sent me here to get the same thing for her."

"I suppose you want the same ammo?"

"Sure, the Gold Dot is pretty good stuff."

"Randy Webster wasn't it? I saw their pictures in the paper and I thought it said he was survived by his wife, June and two foster children."

"Right, my name is..."

"Deputy Dawg. I'd know you anywhere. The guns and the suppressor will run you 2 ounces. Why don't you get the S&W, I have one?"

"Pretty small gun."

"It's about the same power as the .45. It's a close up weapon that we sell a lot of as backups."

"No paperwork?"

"Of course not, you're from Kansas and the law hasn't changed that much. Did he ever get the bourbon done?"

"He was killed before it was ready to bottle, would you like to try some?"

"You have some?"

"I can give you a bottle of the '14, that's the first year he made it."

"I'd like that. I'll throw in a cleaning kit and some of the Gold Dot for the .357. That will be 3 gold Eagles."

I should hope he'd throw in some ammo, \$3,750 for 2 guns that cost maybe \$2,100 retail and a suppressor that went for maybe \$600. On the other hand, there wasn't any paperwork and I did have the revolver June wanted me to get. I can't say that I was totally pleased; I was retired from the Army and wanted my gun toting days to end. 400 miles each way just to buy an item the ATF still frowned upon, especially if it wasn't registered.

Yes, the law had loosened up, but not the attitudes of the feds. We had 10 of the M4FA fitted to M16s or M4s and several of the M1A had the 7.62mm version of the same suppressor. It made sense for a sniper to use a suppressor, but we were only farmers. I've been on this farm too long, only farmers?

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June said the feds probably wouldn't show up until the fall when we had the corn harvested and could be expected to be producing alcohol. With that in mind, we stored the corn and used our existing supply of anhydrous to produce biodiesel. These were uneasy times; the US may have defeated México, but the NOA and the National Council of La Raza were keeping things stirred up. We were totally surprised when our Tejano

friends showed up.

"The offer of a job still open?"

"We said so Juan and we keep our word. It's a bit slow this time of year, but we'll figure something out. Do you want to live on the farms or in Lakin?"

"Out here, some of those people in Lakin and Garden City support the Reconquista."

"Would singlewide mobile homes be ok?"

"If that's what you intend to provide for housing, I guess so."

We bought 36 used mobile homes from several parks in the area. Our new employees help clean them up and we set them, expanded the septic systems on the 3 farms and hooked them to the big wind turbine. Most of them were ranch hands down in Texas, but there was a plumber and an electrician amongst the group. Ralph Barrows said he was too old to maintain the turbine any longer and Johnny and he were moving back to Leoti. We set one of the new used homes on the site of their home. The plumber had plenty to do and we sent 12 families to Gunny's and 12 to Hanks.

Marilyn was ready to resume teaching but with the number of children we now had, the school district said it was cheaper to bus them to Lakin. That was a kick in the teeth; home schooling had been a good source of income. We bottled the bourbon Jason said was ready and unloaded it quickly, if June said ATF was coming, they'd be here.

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I was just finishing up dusting when there was a knock at the door.

"Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. We have a warrant to search your entire farm."

"What are you looking for?"

"We understand that you produce the Proprietor's Reserve Bourbon."

"We buy an occasional bottle and drink it, but produce it, hardly. Go ahead and look, aside from a partial bottle of the stuff, the only alcohol we have is a keg of beer and the anhydrous we use to make biodiesel. You can't drink that, it is poison. We distill it out of the finished biodiesel, so I suppose that qualifies as a still."

"We aren't interested in that, but we heard you also have unregistered automatic weapons."

"Nothing is locked, so don't break anything looking. The only automatic weapons you'll

find belong to Kearny County Deputies."

I left; I didn't want to watch them tearing our home apart. I went down to the barn and told Dan the AFT was here and suggested he come with me to Marilyn's. He contacted Dan and Jeremy and told them to keep an eye on the feds. I normally carry my Chief's Special in a holster in the pit of my back. I strapped on that new Laredoan rig on the way out and got my Winchester, that raised a few eyebrows. We saddled 2 horses and rode over to Marilyn's to tell them the news.

"So where is everything, kiddo?"

"Let's see, it's Tuesday, right? The tractor trailer rig is parked in Garden City today. Tomorrow, it will be moved to Syracuse and on Thursday, Leoti. We never leave in one place for more than 24 hours."

"Once they search the place, are you planning on bringing the stuff back?"

"Unlikely, Gunny. It would be just like the feds to wait a couple of weeks and execute another warrant."

"Dan where did Jeremy and you go last week?"

"Tulsa. We got another H&K USP Tactical and suppressor for June and a Chief's Special for me."

"Where do you store those?"

"In the shelter along with the other weapons. They can't possibly find the entrance since I got a couple of the Tejanos to build that storage case in the basement. Remind me to show you how to open the door to the shelter."

"What do you have those fellas doing?"

"We're redoing all of the old wiring, making repairs to the plumbing and I had those two build that door. Mostly they're handling the livestock and 2 are working with Dan and Jeremy."

"What are we going to do with the extra horses?"

"Herds getting too big?"

"This coming spring, we're going to have way too many. Hank was saying that unless they cut their herd, they'll run out of grass."

"If that's the case, we'd better take them to an auction. Maybe we can get some new stallions to improve our bloodlines at the same time."

"Where do you think the feds will strike next?"

"They'll probably be here tomorrow and at Rachel's on Thursday. The agent said that the warrant covered our entire farm, so they may even hit some of the kid's places."

"What did it specify?"

"Stills and automatic firearms. I told them about the unit that removes the ethanol from the biodiesel. I don't believe they'll bother that, the City and County are our biggest biodiesel customers."

"More coffee?"

"We really should be getting home. Dan, would you tighten the cinches on the horses?"

"Are you still here?"

"Still looking."

"Did you find anything other than what I told you that you would find?"

"Not so far."

"You've had enough time to discover the Ark of the Covenant."

"Do you have that?"

"No. According to the movie, it's in a government warehouse."

"We seized the partial bottle of illegal bourbon you had."

"No problem, we can buy another."

"Really, where?"

"That would be telling, wouldn't it?"

"Tell me where you buy it and well leave you alone."

"Is that a threat?"

"What do you mean?"

"The implication is that if I don't tell you, you will harass us until I do."



"We'll be back."

"When?"

"That would be telling, wouldn't it?"

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I figured the house and the buildings would all be torn up. Far from it, they had almost been neat. I wonder what they thought they'd find in my underwear drawer, a Ma Deuce. I'd managed to keep my figure and Dan liked the frilly stuff so I kept wearing it. I could still wear some of the size 4 stuff, but mostly wore size 5 now. I was careful what I cooked because Dan had a tendency to gain weight and wasn't getting quite as much outside exercise as when we first got married. I'd kept the same basic menu, but had reduced the portion size. I had to slowly nurse him back into chili, the stuff those gals made in Texas had nearly ruined his taste buds. I now had Manny's wife, Teresa, helping with the house cleaning. I still dusted daily but she came in once a week and spent most of a day cleaning it back to the shine.

*...another bombing in Houston. No one claimed credit for this bombing of a predominately Anglo private school. The assassination of Minutemen founder Jim Gilchrist last week led to a wave of anti-Hispanic unrest in Tucson, the new headquarters for the Minutemen Organization. So far, the FBI has no clues to who was behind the murder.*

*In other news...*

"They probably never will figure out who killed him, honey, there are 25 million potential candidates, not counting our regular Hispanic population."

"Why don't they just go home and rebuild México, Dan?"

"They probably don't want to learn to speak Russian, June. About the only countries that helped México after this past spring were Russia and China. I think that China is interested in getting the oil México produces."

"I read that 'México is expected to adopt energy policies that encourage the efficient development of its vast resource base. Expected production volumes in México exceed 4 million barrels/day by the end of the decade and show little decline out to 2020.'

"México's oil production has relied heavily upon production from the Cantarell field (EUR ~25 billion barrels) which dwarfs all other Mexican oil fields. Over the last decade Cantarell's crude oil production has consistently been > 1,000,000 b/d and in 1999 Cantarell's production was over 1,200,000 b/d, 41.7% of México's crude oil production. In the last few years, Cantarell's crude oil production level has been maintained by a massive nitrogen injection project that forces oil out of the field. In spite of this effort, Cantarell's crude oil production is poised to decline and that will drag down future Mexican

oil production. A production decline rate of 10%/year or greater is reasonable for Cantarell based upon the decline rates of other giant (EUR > 500 million barrels) and supergiant (EUR > 5 billion barrels) fields around the world that are in decline. If Cantarell starts declining in 2002, as appears likely, at a rate of 10%/year, production from Cantarell would decline approximately 500,000 b/d by 2007 and approximately 800,000 b/d by 2012. Such a decline would have a significant impact on future Mexican oil production. Other large fields in Mexico such as Ku (~282,000 b/d peak) and Abkatun (~413,000 b/d peak), which provided another 13% of Mexico's crude oil production in 1999, are in decline. This has led to smaller than projected oil production increases in Mexico for the last few years.

"There are undeveloped areas, particularly in the Gulf of Mexico, that will be developed in coming years but it is likely that Mexican oil production will experience a sizeable decline over the next two decades as the large Mexican fields decline. An oil production level of 4 mb/d will probably not be attainable."

"Where did you read that?"

"On the computer, where else? Randy spent hours copying files from the internet and converting them to pdf files. You will find every Army Field Manual there that Global Security had, whether it was a pdf file or html file. He claimed that when we needed to know something, the internet would probably be down and we couldn't access it so he copied nearly everything of interest into a file and then converted it. I have a section too that includes the entire Virtual Naval Hospital, the Combat Lifesavers course with the instruction manual and several other reference articles."

"But you didn't become a PA so you couldn't do any serious surgery."

"I couldn't do a coronary bypass, but if there wasn't a surgeon available, I could try to save a seriously injured person."

"I kept you from becoming a PA, didn't I?"

"Jan had already suggested that if I had problems with Paramedic School, becoming a PA would be very difficult."

"Who?"

"When I was starting out as a Paramedic, I worked in Lakin with a man named Ron who was married to a woman named Jan. I think it was she who suggested I move to Garden City because the pay was better. And then, I met you and didn't give much more thought to becoming a PA. If I had to choose between you and becoming a PA, someone else would have to cure the ills of the world."

"I seem to recall you saying that you thought of several things."

"I felt that I might be falling in love with you and Randy hadn't been dead all that long. I had to consider the risk of marrying you and having you end up like Randy. I think if that had happened I'd have ended up like Rachel."

"I can't imagine that happening, June."

"I buried myself in school so I didn't really have to deal with what happened to Randy. In time, I came to accept his death and to move on with my life. The only difference between me and Rachel is that she dwelled on her loss. Marilyn, on the other hand, got over her grief quickly and began looking for a replacement. She went through a couple before she landed on Gunny."

"You must have been very concerned when we got into that mess down in Texas."

"It's been a while now and I've come to accept many things, including the facts that the four of you are Hell on wheels. I don't even know why I wanted the USP Tactical; I have a Springfield Armory XD45."

"I'll have to admit, the Chief's Special makes a nice backup, but as light as it is, the recoil is pretty heavy."

"I do most of my practicing with .38 Special and just a few rounds of .357 magnum."

"Why?"

"I get my accuracy first and then adjust to the recoil. As small as I am I'd probably flinch otherwise."

"I'd say so; they only weigh 12 ounces empty. Maybe a little more with the Crimson Trace grips."

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"Have you heard anything about the west coast? We haven't heard anything on the news since Yellowstone erupted."

"Just those rumors that NOA had taken over southern California while we were down in Texas."

"Oh, I was just curious. Before the war, more than 10% of the US population lived in California. It had to be devastating, two earthquakes and a tsunami and then the ash they must have gotten from Yellowstone. I haven't been there since we took the training at Ft. Irwin."

"I thought you had vacationing out of your system."

"A 4 month vacation was way too long but I was thinking of something like 3-4 weeks."

"I'm game but only if it's safe. You get on the net and see what you can find. I wouldn't trust anything you hear on the national news; I swear the government must be censoring it."

I checked the list and California must have had over 100 newspapers listed, this was going to take some time. The big newspapers like the LA Times, San Francisco Chronicle and the San Jose Mercury either weren't publishing or their websites were down. The Sacramento Bee was. It listed highway re-openings, but had scant news about the trouble in the southland. There were several articles about communities in northern California rebuilding, after digging out of the ash. The cities on the Peninsula, especially San Francisco were all sealed off. The Golden Gate and Bay Bridges were down. The San Mateo Bridge, which was mostly a causeway, was out.

I tried the Portland Oregonian and was surprised to learn that Portland hadn't been badly hit by the Tsunami although the earthquake did some damage. They had reports on the Cascade Range and nothing was currently erupting. There was nothing out of Seattle, but I didn't really expect to connect to any of their papers.

Conclusion, the trip was possible, depending on the roads and one other small problem, changing trailer partners. I could clearly recall the Mistress of the Dark saying, "I like the tall one." Marilyn had confided that she couldn't take much more of Rachel's mood swings. I'd work on Dan and Marilyn would nudge Gunny into the change providing we went. Long sections of I-80 were closed; I-70 wasn't much better and I-40 was in the southern tier of states. Still, the best route would be to take US 84 out of Garden City and pick up US 54 in Liberal and take it to Tucumcari, New Mexico where we could get on I-40.

"We can do it Dan. I don't know about traveling on I-40, though, maybe we should take some of the Tejanos with us."

"How would we handle their accommodations?"

"Borrow Jim's truck and pull 2 4-horse trailers and one 6-horse trailer. The fellas could drive the vehicles and we could just relax."

"Just when do you want to go on this fool's errand?" (A fool's errand is a practical joke that involves experienced people making fun of newcomers by giving them an impossible or imaginary task, like the time I was sent for a muffler belt.)

"Not until March, I wouldn't want to get stuck in snow in New México."

## The Odyssey – Chapter 8

"I'll talk to the fellas about it."

"Don't be surprised if Gunny tells you they want to move to our tent if we go. I think it might be good for Rachel to pal with Elle for a while. Maybe a new perspective might brighten her days."

"And you wouldn't mind getting her away from me, right?"

"I have no idea what you mean."

Let's face it; a girl has a right to change her mind, right? Like those holsters, with the buckle in the back they were hard to get on and off. You had to remove the revolvers, buckle on the holsters and belt, reverse it and then add the guns. Beside one long barreled and one short barreled Colt made more sense, I'm glad Dan could get them.

o

Dan just told me that Mom and he were thinking about taking another vacation, out west this time. I expressed my opinion that with the civil unrest related to the NOA and La Raza it wasn't the best place for a vacation. Dan explained that they wanted to borrow my pickup and the new 6 horse trailer because they'd be taking 6 of the Tejanos with them for security reasons. I'd heard around about that Tom's wife Elle had a thing for one of those Tejanos and wondered if he would be making the trip. He also said that Gunny and Marilyn would be staying with them on this trip, probably one of Mom's ideas to get the Mistress of the Dark away from her man.

You think we didn't know about Elvira and Mom comparing her to Cassandra Peterson? I'd found photos on the internet and they were, shall we say, most revealing... but not shocking. I checked and her figure is listed at 34-21-34, so I guess she was scrunching them a bit. Actually, until she created Elvira, her career was in the slow lane. And then she got sued by Vampira, the original Mistress of the Dark from the '50s (she won). Vampira had the real figure anyway, 36-21-35.

If they weren't going until March, Julia and I had more than enough time to try and talk some sense into them. The change in the Country was primarily in the targets. In the past, the gangster's tended to shoot each other but now they were going after the rest of us. I'll wager that concealed carry permit or not, many of the folks were carrying these days. On another subject, the ATF came 3 times and finding nothing, had to give up. They couldn't get a judge to sign another search warrant. Without a warrant they weren't searching anything, the SOBs.

We finally got the semi back home in October and unloaded it, hopefully for good. We made the sour mash and filled up 36 more barrels after we charred them. New, they didn't prove anything and the few thousand empty bottles stored at Gunny's were for

bottling a little homemade wine for personal consumption. Ray used Budweiser kegs so they didn't know the beer was homebrew.

Dan told me to plan on selling some of the horses, we weren't going to have enough feed next year, according to Hank and Gunny. I have to look at the herds with Jason and pick out the likely candidates, probably some of the older mares. It seemed to me that the geldings seemed to run a bit bigger than the stallions, but I have no idea why.

o

I was surprised when Mom and Dan gave our kids and Jim's kids 12 silver Eagles each for Christmas plus clothing gifts. Later she told me they planned to do that from now on, until they were both gone. I stammered something about her being way too young to die and she said the kids would probably all have 20 years' worth of silver Eagles before then. I tried to talk her out of the trip to the west coast but she said unless we had a blizzard, they were going.

We got snow all right, but no blizzard; in fact the snow was about normal and almost back to before Yellowstone erupted. It wasn't the same Country anymore. Race relations had always been poor in America but now several minorities and the near majority Hispanic population were working to change things. The really sad thing was that they had learned about how our Constitutional Republic worked and now had enough votes to divide the Congress into something that no longer represented what we'd always had, a 2-party system.

I guess I shouldn't have been surprised, they intentionally moved to areas creating large voting blocks and controlled about one-third of the House and soon would control one-third of the Senate. The marches in streets represented various groups, sometimes Latinos, other groups were Muslims and somewhere in between were the militant blacks under the Nation of Islam. The white citizens were still a majority but the self-initiated Gerrymandering was changing things.

There are two principal strategies behind gerrymandering: maximizing the effective votes of supporters, and minimizing the effective votes of opponents. One form of gerrymandering, packing is to place as many voters of one type into a single district to reduce their influence in other districts. A second form, cracking, involves spreading out voters of a particular type among many districts in order to reduce their representation by denying them a sufficiently large voting bloc in any particular district. The methods are typically combined, creating a few "forfeit" seats for packed voters of one type in order to secure even greater representation for voters of another type. Once the new representatives were elected, they formed a coalition and more often than not sided with the liberal Democrats.

Many credited Jesse Jackson and his Rainbow Coalition for the practice, but in truth it was Farrakhan's idea. Jackson was old and although he still had a big mouth, few listened to him any longer. Farrakhan, born in 1933, was older than Jackson, born in

1941. He was mostly out of the picture these days. The initial coalition was between the Nation of Islam and the newly elected Muslims, they had a common cause. They then extended an olive branch to the outspoken new Latinos and we had a 3 party government. In nothing flat another immigration bill was introduced in the House for yet another amnesty program and it passed. The Senate not being fully packed thought they could defeat the measure, but they failed by a single vote. With that many new voters, you can imagine the outcome of the next elections.

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Around Valentine's Day (2022) the guys began to get the trailers ready. They replaced the small freezer with a bigger upright and had we ladies make suggestions this time around. Although the freezer had a locking door, Dan added a strap for insurance. I checked with what was left of AAA and they didn't recommend travel to the west coast because unavailability of food, housing and fuel.

I noticed that our M16s now sported M203's and all of our magazines were new or refurbished. Gunny and Dan had new boy toys although I have no idea where they came up with a pair of Tac-50s, fully equipped. Jim had relented and allowed our 6 security people to use his pickup and 6 horse trailer. The old upright went into their trailer and they stocked it with whatever they wanted to take.

I half figured Gunny and Dan would buy H-1 Alpha Hummers, there were several on the market in good shape with all of the options and low mileage. Dealers couldn't give them away because of the continuing fuel crunch. Speaking of which, Middle East oil was a thing of the past. Since our set to with México, that source dried up and Chávez was the President for life of Venezuela and he didn't like us. The Trans-Alaskan pipeline had been extended and now came to the US, but that second Alaskan field wasn't as good a producer as projected and they were afraid to drill off the California coast for fear of causing more earthquakes.

You do understand that a 6-horse trailer is very big and uses a 5th wheel hitch? They weight about 9,000# empty and then you add 6 horses, the tack and the total weight gets you into the commercial class of vehicle. Add another ½ ton for the freezer and other stuff you're carrying, like 400 gallons of biodiesel. When it was all said and done, we had a 6-vehicle caravan. It was all but humorous, a million dollars' worth of equipment, animals and extras, all for a 3-4 week vacation, in, of all places, the dead zone. That's what they called it on TV. Travel was not only not recommended, it was discouraged. Phooey on them, we were headed to California and that was that. We were out of here around Monday, February 28, 2022. We wouldn't be out of touch this time; Gunny bought an Iridium satellite phone.

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Maybe that last remark needs some explaining.

Iridium communications service was launched on November 1, 1998 and went into bankruptcy on August 13, 1999. Its financial failure was largely due to insufficient demand for the service. The increased coverage of terrestrial cellular networks (e.g. GSM) and the rise of roaming agreements between cellular providers proved to be fierce competition. The cost of service was also prohibitive for many users, despite the continuous world-wide coverage of the Iridium service. In addition, the bulkiness and expense of the handheld devices when compared to terrestrial cellular mobile phones discouraged adoption among users. The Iridium satellites were, however, remained in orbit, and their services were re-established in 2001 by the newly founded Iridium Satellite LLC, owned by a group of private investors.

The system is being used extensively by the US DOD for its communication purposes through the DOD Gateway in Hawaii. The commercial Gateway in Tempe, Arizona provides voice, data and paging services for commercial customers on a global basis. Typical customers include maritime, aviation, government, the petroleum industry, scientists, and frequent world travelers. Because the military had a vested interest, they now make sure the system was always up. Originally envisioned as a system with 77 satellites, the system had 66 for several years and coverage wasn't available to North Korea and Sri Lanka. After the war and into the recovery, the military and its contractors launched the other 11 satellites plus a few spares. Iridium Satellite has contracted with the Boeing Company to operate and maintain the satellite constellation, and Celestica has agreed to provide subscriber equipment.

While the phones were expensive to purchase and expensive to operate, as long as you were outside with a clear view of the sky, you were in contact with the whole world. I wouldn't be a bit surprised, given our track record, that Dan and Jeremy, Jim and John, and Ray and Don hadn't already organized the next 'rescue mission'. No doubt they bought the Hummers the minute we left and started cutting in machinegun mounts.

A person can drive from Los Angeles, California to Des Moines, Iowa in 24 hours flat, if you push a little, ergo, average 70mph. Depending on your age, it will take a week to recover. With that in mind, we could putt our way to California in a couple of days unless we stopped to sight see. Well, why the hell not, we were on vacation. According to the mapping software, the route we chose wasn't the shortest, but going through Colorado, wasn't a good idea because of Yellowstone. On the other hand, going through the southern tier of states wasn't the best idea either, but we were prepared for a little adventure.

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Day 1

Departure Location: Lakin, Kansas

Departure Time: 0800

Ricardo is driving our truck and Marilyn and I are passengers. I have the notebook and am making notes in a trip diary. Gunny and Dan are in the 2nd truck with Jose driving. I



had worked on getting Rachel off those darned Xanax so when the stuff invariably hit the rotating blade they'd do some good. When we left Garden City, Jim and John stopped off to look at the used Hummers.

We made it to Tucumcari and found a place to board the horses and then motel rooms. We had our pick; there wasn't much travel on Route 66 these days. Speaking of which, do you know who wrote *Get Your Kicks on Route 66*? Remember that old TV show, *Emergency* and Dr. Joe Early, played by Julie London's husband, Bobby Troup? Bobby Troup wrote the song and one of the other actors in the series, Martin Milner aka Officer Pete Malloy, starred in the old TV series *Route 66*. That show had one heck of a guest list: Boris Karloff, Lee Marvin, Robert Duvall, Warren Stevens, Lew Ayers, Michael Rennie, Martin Sheen, Dorothy Malone, Ed Asner, Walter Matthau, Edward Andrews, Leslie Nielsen, Anne Francis, Jack Lord, William Shatner and Dan Duryea, just to name a few.

There is almost nothing to see between Lakin and Tucumcari, so I thought I'd tell you about what I picked up at the motel desk, the info on Route 66. Troup, it seems was a Big Band drummer. He died in 1999 and Julie London a year later. Jack Webb, Julie's first husband, produced and directed *Emergency*. You know him, Sgt. Joe Friday, Badge 714. A line from *Emergency*: *We have a male, tunnel worker, approximate age 60, was trapped under a digging machine. Patient had a cardiac history. He is now diaphoretic. Vital signs: 80 over 50; rate: 100 and irregular; respirations: 12 and shallow.* All it means is the guy is sweating. That patient went into defibrillation and they zapped him with 400 watt seconds from the git go. I don't think so!

I was now carrying a Zoll-AED capable of delivering 120J, 150J and 200J. Joules is just another name for watt second. Considering we were all in our 60s, I thought having the things I needed to treat a heart attack or a stroke were a very good idea. I didn't transport plasma because the freezer took too much power. The E85 gensets had been replaced by diesel fueled mounted gensets with demand switches replacing the automatic transfer switches. I don't understand how they work, but when the freezer starts to warm up, the demand switch starts the genset and it runs until the temp is back at zero.

The purpose of the automatic disconnection / demand switch is to shut off electricity at the fuse box, therefore eliminating electric fields on a particular wiring circuit. The switch is usually added to an existing circuit just after the circuit breaker and switches the hot, or black wire, of that circuit. The switch is mounted in its own separate electrical box. Please note that the circuit will still be protected by the circuit breaker. The switch is by no means a circuit breaker replacement but an additional in-line device. Each switch controls a single circuit.

A demand switch works quite simply by shutting off the electricity at the fuse box automatically. For example, if a switch is installed on a lighting circuit in the bedroom, the switch will automatically sense when the last light on that circuit is turned off at night. At this point the demand switch has determined there is no demand for electricity and turns off the electricity at the fuse box. Therefore, there is no electricity present in the wires beyond the fuse box, thus eliminating electric fields on this wiring circuit. Simple, yet

100% effective in protecting us from electric fields emitted by this lighting circuit while we sleep, allowing our bodies to repair themselves naturally.

In the morning, when we awake and switch on the lights, the demand switch senses a demand for electricity and automatically restores electricity to this circuit for normal operation. In most cases, the demand switch is the most effective way of eliminating unwanted electric fields in the bedroom. Ours worked by initiating the genset's controller's start circuit and when the freezer shut off, it shut down the generator. Clever, yes? No?

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## Day 2

Departure Location: Tucumcari, New México

Departure Time: 0830

We got a late start today because the diner was busy and we had to pick up the horses. I can tell what they have most of in Tucumcari – motels. Many of them were closed due to a lack of business. According to the desk clerk, most people took the advice of the various travel services and didn't come west often. We were stopped by a cop who saw the guns we were wearing and he explained the local rules to us. He wanted to know if we had CCWs and we showed him our new CCWs issued by Kansas (finally). He said he didn't know if NM had reciprocity with Kansas, and we assured him that Kansas now had reciprocity with everyone. When they finally got off the damn dime, they went whole hog.

That happened as a result of the problems they were having in some Kansas cities with their Latino population. The issuing authority was the County Sheriff and he had wide latitude. Because we had all been reserves at once time, he filled them out and brought them to us without even being asked. He only beat us by one day; we had planned to go to town the next day. We filled out the applications and he approved them right on the spot. As of when we left, 44 states now had CCWs with full reciprocity. California wasn't one of them, but Arizona was.

I didn't mention our route, did I? We were taking old route 66 as much as possible because we weren't in a hurry and wanted to see what was left of those old towns. The answer, simply put, was very little. Most of them were all but ghost towns, down to few stores serving the locals. There for a stretch near Santa Rosa, we got back on the freeway because the old road was in bad shape. We did drive through Santa Rosa and had lunch there at Joseph's Bar and Grill.

We went through Clines Corners, Moriarty, Tijeras and on in to Albuquerque where we housed the horses and then ourselves. We planned to stay over a day and see the sights. There wasn't a whole lot to see, however, the war you know. There were all kinds of choices on the menu at the café, as long as you liked Méxican food. The population, which before the war had been about 40% Hispanic, was closer to 66% Hispanic. Like a darned fool, Dan order chili and told them mild. One spoonful and he ordered ta-

cos and burritos instead.

This close to California, we could get some news, but we were told that it would be better to stay on I-40 the remainder of the way west, banditos, you know. Rather than spend the 2 days we had planned on, we left the next morning intent on making it to Holbrook, Arizona.

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Day 3

Departure Location: Albuquerque, New México

Departure Time: 0700

We made it as far as Pinta Road in Arizona where we exited. Pinta Road is just a lonely exit out in the desert a few miles east of Petrified Forest National Park. There are no services here and most Interstate travelers pass it by without giving it a second glance-Holbrook is just down the road. But it is in this area that Route 66 can be seen as a true ghost. We drove north of the Pinta Road exit down a dirt road almost a mile where we came to the crumbling asphalt of a once major highway. Route 66 cuts through the Painted Desert, a forgotten line of dark gray against the desert shrubbery, a ghost road winding its way to an even ghostlier destination.

Once we found the remains of Route 66 we turned towards the west and the setting sun. There was something I wanted to see, I had a destination in mind. I only hoped we would get to it before the sun set and left us in the blackness of desert night. Route 66 is pitted and rough but passable along this stretch. We continued on for about two and a half miles and came to one of the loneliest ghosts I have encountered on Route 66 in all my travels. All alone surrounded by the vast desert stood the shell of the once great Painted Desert Trading Post. As the shadows lengthened and the sky turned a brilliant red I stood in the silence and pondered what once went on here. Indeed, this place is haunted.

We made camp right here with the ghosts. The fellas strung a picket rope for the horses and then when the horses were settled, we opened the tent trailers for the first time and made do with canned goods. They finally broke out a bottle of the bourbon. Oh yeah, they brought a bunch, 4 cases, this was only a 3-4 week trip but at least we didn't have 16 cases of bourbon and 5 kegs of beer this time. One case and a couple of kegs of beer would have been more than enough, but you know how the men were...

"I made old fashioned June, I hope they are to your liking."

"Spooky out here isn't it?"

"We're actually not that far from Holbrook, what do you want to see tomorrow?"

"I think we go by the Meteor Crater about 70 miles west of Holbrook and it would be

nice to see that."

"That's the place that Shoemaker confirmed was a crater and not a volcano, right?"

"Yes and they trained the Apollo Astronauts there."

"Big fringing hole in the ground if you ask me," Gunny said.

"Relax, dear, this is a vacation and we aren't in a hurry," Marilyn chided.

"Are we going to get hit by another meteor?"

"No Rachel, not that I know of and if it's a big one, it won't make any difference."

I didn't offer her the pill, it's just freeze dried alcohol anyway and she had a drink. I finished my drink a little quickly and encouraged everyone to do the same. Once we had a couple of drinks in us the canned beef stew would taste better and hopefully she'd be chilled out. The hands were heating a can of refried beans to make burritos, I think. We didn't have any tequila, but Dan gave them a bottle of bourbon and they were doing quite well with the substitute.

"So after we stare into the big fringing hole, then what?"

"We'll only be about 30 miles from Flagstaff, want to stay there or push on?"

"Let's go to the other big fringing hole in the ground and spend the night there. Flown over that sum bit often enough, it's high time I saw it."

"Don't cuss, dear."

"Marilyn, you wanted a Marine and you got a Marine and cuss words are part of the package. After the Grand Canyon, I would like to see if my buddies are still at the Yermo Annex."

"Do you care how we get there?"

"Nope."

"Fine, we'll spend tomorrow night at the south rim and look around a bit the day after. Then we can go up US 89 and come through Zion from the east. We might spend the next night in Zion or St. George."

"And go through Lost Wages?"

"You've been to Las Vegas?"

"Lost plenty of wages there; no need to stop on my account."

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Day 4

Departure Location: Painted Desert, Arizona

Departure Time: 0645

Unless looking at a big coal fired power plant trips your trigger, there was nothing to see in Holbrook and we were at the Meteor Crater by the time they opened. There are a lot of Native Americans in Arizona and that sort of served to keep the Latino population in check. The Hispanics had taken over much of the non-reservation property, but that whole thing last year happened during the winter when Arizona was full of snowbirds that happened to enjoy Arizona's rather open gun laws. Let me spell that for you, "Mid-western farmers'. Old, yes, but they were also mostly conservative and had survived the H5N1, WW III, the Supervolcano and civil unrest at home. They were, on the average, a bit narrow minded when it came to people taking over 'their town' (Mesa), so many of the new arrivals ended up staying in Tucson.

*Time is on my side, yes it is*

*Time is on my side, yes it is*

*Now you always say*

*That you want to be free*

*But you'll come running back (said you would baby)*

*You'll come running back (I said so many times before)*

*You'll come running back to me*

*Oh, time is on my side, yes it is*

*Time is on my side, yes it is*

*You're searching for good times*

*But just wait and see*

*You'll come running back (I won't have to worry no more)*

*You'll come running back (spend the rest of my life with you, baby)*

*You'll come running back to me*

*Go ahead, go ahead and light up the town*

*And baby, do everything your heart desires*

*Remember, I'll always be around*

*And I know, I know*

*Like I told you so many times before*

*You're gonna come back, baby*

*'Cause I know*

*You're gonna come back knocking*

*Yeah, knocking right on my door*

Yes, yes!

*Well, time is on my side, yes it is  
Time is on my side, yes it is*

*'Cause I got the real love  
The kind that you need  
You'll come running back (said you would, baby)  
You'll come running back (I always said you would)  
You'll come running back, to me  
Yes time, time, time is on my side, yes it is  
Time, time, time is on my side, yes it is  
Oh, time, time, time is on my side, yes it is  
I said, time, time, time is on my side, yes it is  
Oh, time, time, time is on my side  
Yeah, time, time, time is on my side*

I know you know the artist is Mick Jaeger, but what movie is that from? It came out in 1998. As with movies of moral implication do, this movie begins with mysticism and keeps going. It has to be followed carefully or you will get lost. It takes you in and keeps you going from beginning to end. But not for the viewer who does not like *The Seventh Sign* or *The Prophecy*. These movies are in a league of their own and can be viewed more than one time to see more than you saw the first time. Enjoyable and although not an action movie, action packed.

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Gunny was right; it was just a large hole in the ground but to think that it was caused by a rock only 150' across was scary. The rock that wiped out the dinosaurs was only 6 miles across. According to one website, the impact in Yucatán released  $4.3 \times 10^{23}$  joules of energy. That would restart your heart! In recent years, several other craters of around the same age as Chicxulub have been discovered, all between latitudes 20°N and 70°N. Examples include the Silverpit crater in the UK, and the Boltysh crater in Ukraine, both much smaller than Chicxulub but likely to have been caused by objects many tens of meters across striking the earth. This has led to the hypothesis that the Chicxulub impact may have been only one of several impacts that happened all at the same time. Another crater thought to have been formed at the same time is the Shiva crater. The Shiva crater is a hypothesized impact crater located in the Indian Ocean west of India. It has been suggested that it formed around 65 million years ago, the same time as a number of other impacts that are recorded in the K-T boundary. The Deccan Traps are located in the theorized center of the crater, lending support to the idea that the traps were created by the impact event. The crater is believed to be 600 km long and 400 km wide.

## The Odyssey – Chapter 9

Days 5 - 11

Departure Location: South Rim, Grand Canyon, Arizona

Departure Time: 0730

If you've seen one hole in the ground and later the same day a bigger hole in the ground, you're tired of looking at holes in the ground. We looked, said wow a couple of times and went to something rather nice, southern Utah. I don't know that those Latter Day Saints are God's chosen people in this Country, but from the look of southern Utah, He gave them some nice digs. We saw much of it, it took a week and quite honestly, I lost track, we'd seen so many natural wonders. The best I could manage was to mark our route on a highway map with brief notes. We were taking digital pictures and loading them into the laptop for later viewing. Somewhere in the middle of all that was a Sunday and Sunday was a day of rest. I can tell you it was day 7, but I can't tell you where we were.

"I think we got off schedule a little."

"Who cares, have you ever seen such pretty Country?"

"Pretty yes, but I'd hate like hell to try and farm it."

"A little ways north of here is good farming Country, Gunny."

"I'll take you word for it, want another beer?"

"Hey, slow down we don't want to get drunk and have to deal with hangovers tomorrow. I'm still nursing the one I have."

"Hank, Tom, more beer?"

Hank said yes and Tom said no. We sat and looked at the Utah map, lining out our next stops and planning on being in St. George by day 11. That way, we could get to Barstow and Gunny could try and find his friends on the afternoon of day 12.

June had spent time, or did I tell you, explaining how Randy and she got started out; 160 acres and every spare dime going into getting prepared. I'd be inclined to say it was a shame he didn't live to see how it all turned out, but my name isn't Van Gogh and that would be cutting off my nose to spite my face. Wait, he cut off his ear. The farm was now 4 times larger, totally paid for and had almost more livestock than the land could support. We made money from bourbon, biodiesel, selling livestock and grain and had been darned lucky. Hard work is its own reward, and as someone said, God helps those that help themselves. I was enjoying myself this time and we even took a little time to fish.

"Day dreaming again?"

"Just thinking how lucky we are."

"Hang on to that thought, next week we'll be in California, liberal Heaven. If we can get away with carrying one weapon, we'll be lucky."

"You don't have something small like Chiefs Special's do you?"

"Nope, but I have a Colt Commander and I can lose it pretty well in the gear I carry. We'll just have to stay close to our vehicles."

"What are you looking for in Barstow, ammo?"

"Mk 211MP .50 caliber. I know a couple of retired Marines who work there now. You know that it's going to be expensive, don't you? If we can we'll buy maybe 600 rounds."

"What will that run?"

"About \$5 a round. That's not too bad for match grade."

"Brother if it comes to that, I don't give a crap how much the ammo costs."

"We'll use Tom and Hank for spotters, which one do you want?"

"Doesn't really matter to me, would Hank be ok?"

"Tom was in logistics the entire time he served?"

"Yeah, but he was on the rifle team for a while."

"Ever shoot competition?"

"Camp Perry."

"Good enough for me. Why don't you check Hank out on your Super Match? He was rated expert."

"Sure, good idea. If we do run into trouble in California, we'll probably have to shoot our way out. I think they've outlawed everything but air rifles."

"I don't like the idea of going anywhere without our weapons available," Hank interjected.

"You have something to carry concealed, right?"



"Glock 30, that's a .45 caliber compact with a 9 round magazine and one in the pipe. The problem with the handgun is that it's up close and personal. If they get within that range, they're too damned close."

"Gunny and I were discussing a couple of sniper teams with an observer and a sniper, Hank. How about you being my observer and get checked out on the Super Match?"

"Been dying to try it. Not an M21, but close."

"Major difference is the stock. The literature says the M21 uses the Super Match rifle on an adjustable stock."

"I'll give it a go; do you have a scope on the rifle?"

"Leupold Mark 4 4.5-14x50mm LR/T IR."

"Nice."

"It has a Surefire FA762SSA on it."

"Very nice. Accurate?"

"Sub-MOA, the weapon is better than I am."

"Tom, will you spot for me?" Gunny asked.

"Sure."

"I was telling Gunny that if we run into trouble in California we'll probably have to shoot our way out."

o

I heard something rather disturbing from a lady from California I was visiting with. She said that they appeared to have some kind of epidemic. You couldn't leave the state without a doctor's certification that you were disease free and they weren't letting many people in. I ran through my records and everyone was current on all of their shots including the standard influenza shots. I don't know why I bothered; I'd checked everyone before we left. Just reassuring myself, I guess. She also said something about the agricultural border station but I didn't understand what that was all about.

We spent our final day in Utah touring Zion National Park. We'd seen so much scenery on this trip, it wasn't that impressive. Maybe if that had been our only destination, it would have been different. We camped out each night and I was looking forward to getting a motel room in St. George. You couldn't really get a good shower in that unit in the tent trailer. I had noticed that once we got to Utah, we didn't see quite as many Hispan-

ics. Before the war, the Hispanic population was under 10% and I heard that it was now fewer than 5%. I wonder if they were being forced out.

o

Day 12

Departure Location: St. George, Utah

Departure Time: 0800

I stood in the shower last night until I turned into a prune; it really felt good to be totally clean. We left early and had to go through a border inspection station just to leave Utah. In bound I could see, but were they trying to keep the Saints home? It was a spectacular drive down the Virgin River Canyon and then we hit another inspection station when we hit Nevada. They wanted to see ID and know why we came to Nevada. Seemed disappointed that we were just passing through, but really checked the papers for our Tejanos.

Our next stop was one we hadn't planned on. After 3 hours or so of steady driving, we hit Vegas but didn't even slow down. The streets appeared to be nearly deserted; I wondered what that was all about. We found out about 30 minutes later when we passed through Stateline. The parking lots of Whiskey Pete's and the other casinos were nearly empty. About ¼-mile into California, we hit an Inspection Station. That used to be down just north of Barstow, what was this all about? The men at the Inspection Station weren't agricultural inspectors, they were members of the California Defense Force and they were armed.

"Sorry folks, due to the illness, the California border is closed."

"Since when?" Gunny asked.

"The full quarantine went into effect 2 days ago. You'll have to turn your vehicles around and return to Las Vegas."

"Chit."

We turned around and pulled over to the side of the road to talk this over.

"Now what?" I asked.

"I'm in favor of going to Henderson and south to pick up US 93. We can take that to Kingman and pickup US 40," Gunny suggested.

"Ok, then what Gunny?"

"We can stop there and figure out what to do next. I'm going to call my friends on the fancy phone and see what they can tell me. We might as well hit one of the buffets in

Vegas, the food is cheap and it's usually all you can eat."

There was general agreement that Gunny would place his calls on the way back to Vegas and we'd have lunch at a buffet where we could discuss what he'd learned.

"What did you learn?"

"One, they were at work at MCLB, Barstow. Two, it seems that they have an unidentified virus going around that's high contagious. Three, they can ship what we want via rail to Kingman. John said it would take about a week to arrange it and we could pay the escort. Four, the price will be about 50% more than we planned."

"What is there to do in Kingman?"

"There's the Rt. 66 Museum and we could go to the Hualapai Mountain Recreation area while we're waiting."

"What is it, a couple of hours to Kingman?"

"Probably, it's a little over 100 miles."

"You know, for 2 cents, I'd send our Tejanos home."

"Here's a quarter, keep the change."

Right, that's intelligent guys, the main reason people have left us alone is probably because we have six bodyguards who happen to speak the language. I raised my concern, but it fell on deaf ears. Three hours later we were in Kingman and bade goodbye to our companions. They could probably drive straight through and be home tomorrow. We weren't interested in the museum and got directions and information about the Hualapai Mountain Recreation area. We could rent cabins and there was a place for our horses. They didn't tell me about the spiders or mountain lions.

The Hualapai Mountains remain green year-around, being covered in pine trees, namely Piñon Pine. The habitat is mainly forest, and has many natural springs. A recent threat to the community was a mountain lion, a danger to pets and small children. It had been drawn to civilized areas like Piñon Pines and Atherton Acres due to the large deer population. People had been feeding the deer, causing them to rely on humans for food, instead of fending for themselves. There are some animals only native to the Hualapai Mountain range, including a breed of ground squirrel, and a tarantula.

At the top of the mountain, just past the park, is a community known as Pine Lake. The community has approximately 140 homes and is a little over 6,000 ft. in elevation. Several amenities are located in Pine Lake, including the Pine Lake Bed and Breakfast, the Hualapai Mountain Lodge, the Pine Lake General Store and several individuals even rent out their homes for daily or weekend get-a ways. Pine Lake is visited regularly by a

local herd of elk and many mule deer wander around daily.

The escort had Gunny's satellite phone number and was supposed to call when he arrived in Kingman. Most ammo shipments out of Barstow go west to the Pacific Fleet Marines, it would probably take some special arrangements to ship it east.

Days 13 – 17

Location: Hualapai Mountain Recreation area

We went riding most of the time; we are getting too old for a lot of hiking. In some ways, this was the best time of our vacation. One thing I noticed was how much more comfortable the Laredoan cross draw rig was, especially when I was riding. Marilyn confided that as soon as they got home, she was making Gunny get them the same setup as Dan and I had. In the meantime, she took off one of the holsters, exchanged them and wore the belt the right way around with the buckle in the front.

I began to think about what it meant with California closing the border. The guard said "Two days ago", when we tried to enter. What was this disease and what was its incubation period? What was the prognosis if you got it? Some of my questions answered themselves, it had to be very contagious, and the prognosis couldn't be good. Why the news blackout? I say that because, except for what I heard up in Utah and what the guard had said, we knew nothing about it and it couldn't be good news if they were withholding it.

*This is a breaking news alert, please stay tuned for an important announcement about a widespread virus in California resulting in the closure of the state's borders 3 days ago. We take you now to the Center for Disease Control.*

*As of 3 days ago, the state of California, in concert with the CDC, implemented a statewide quarantine. Tests are under way to identify the virus involved. Signs and symptoms of virus typically occur 1-3 weeks after the patient comes into contact with the virus. These include fever, retrosternal pain (pain behind the chest wall), sore throat, back pain, cough, abdominal pain, vomiting, diarrhea, conjunctivitis, facial swelling, proteinuria (protein in the urine), and mucosal bleeding. Neurological problems have also been described, including hearing loss, tremors, and encephalitis. Because the symptoms of the disease are so varied and nonspecific, clinical diagnosis is often difficult.*

*Current testing includes using enzyme-linked immunosorbent serologic assays (ELISA).*

*The most common complication of the illness for those who survive is deafness. Various degrees of deafness occur in approximately one-third of cases, and in many cases hearing loss is permanent. As far as is known, severity of the disease does not affect this complication: deafness may develop in mild as well as in severe cases. Spontaneous abortion is another serious complication. The disease is believed to be spread by rodents however until it is specifically identified, quarantines will remain in effect.*

*Ribavirin, an antiviral drug, has been used with some success in some patients. It has been shown to be most effective when given early in the course of the illness. Patients should also receive supportive care consisting of maintenance of appropriate fluid and electrolyte balance, oxygenation and blood pressure, as well as treatment of any other complicating infections.*

*Initial cases of the disease appeared in the Long Beach area and have been tentatively tied to the arrival of a ship carrying goods from Africa. We anticipate further announcements in the near future. Stay tuned for local information provided to your emergency response organizations' by the CDC.*

"What do you think it is, June?"

"It sounds like something from Africa, doesn't it? The only thing that comes to mind is one of the hemorrhagic fever viruses."

"Is it related to the Ebola virus?"

"Yes, Marilyn. Ebola, Marburg, Lassa and Crimean-Congo viruses are examples of hemorrhagic fever viruses. The only case of Ebola in the US was in Reston, Virginia in 1989. This specific strand of the Ebola virus caused a rather large panic, but after containment, eventually it was discovered that this specific strand of the Ebola virus, although resembling Ebola Zaire, proved fatal only to non-human primates. Still, six of the Reston primate handlers tested positive for the virus (two due to previous exposure), and exhibited severe flu-like symptoms."

"Typically they get from 100,000 – 300,000 cases of Lassa fever a year. It's not as deadly as some of the others."

"But 300,000 cases a year!"

"The upper limit and most of the time, the fatality rate is low, maybe 2%. Occasionally, for some reason it gets higher and can reach 50%. They aren't all the same; Ebola Zaire, Ebola Sudan and Marburg are very deadly. If it is this type of virus, we'll have to wait and see which one."

"We're not staying here are we?"

"I think we should leave as soon as the stuff the guys bought comes in. And next year, I think maybe we should vacation a little closer to home."

"But the quarantine."

"They don't even know exactly what they have, yet. Let's not speculate. We'll just get the stuff and head home."

o

For the medically inclined, the answer to which form of virus it was was already there, it was something the TV announcer had said. When I could get to a computer connection, I could confirm what I suspected. In the meantime, we were fairly isolated and as soon as the ammo came in for the Tac-50s, we'd be gone in a heartbeat.

"Here," Marilyn said handing me the Iridium phone, "It's for you."

"Hello?"

"Mom where are you?"

"Southeast of Kingman, Arizona in a recreation area."

"When are you coming home?"

"As soon as the supplies we bought arrive, Jim."

"What about this virus in California?"

I went on to explain what I suspected and told him to look it up on the CDC website, naming Lassa fever. I told him that to my knowledge, there had never been a case outside of Africa, but a rodent could have been aboard the ship from Africa and somehow spread the disease to our species of rodents. I went on to explain that a frequent side effect of Lassa fever was deafness. It was one of the exotic diseases we covered in some class. Unfortunately, my notes were in the basement of our home. IIRC, the disease was spread through contact with rodent leaving and contact with infected human material, i.e., blood, stools, etc. Jim said he'd check it out and if what I told him didn't connect, someone would let us know.

The CDC published hundreds of fact sheets on exotic diseases, like Ebola, and I nearly forgot that I had the fact sheets on the laptop. After reading the fact sheet on Lassa, I was pretty sure that was what was in California. Signs and symptoms of Lassa fever typically occur 1-3 weeks after the patient comes into contact with the virus. The virus cannot be spread through casual contact (including skin-to-skin contact without exchange of body fluids).

"The ammo is here."

"Good, let's pack up, pick it up and just keep going. We can be home in 24 hours."

"What about our vacation?"

"I've seen enough rocks to last a lifetime. California is closed and I want to get as far from the rats as possible."

"Are you talking about rat rats or the people in California?"

"Take your pick."

o

It was nice to be home. On the way back, June said she'd had enough traveling, everywhere we went we ran into trouble. Suited me just fine, never dipped a line the whole trip. Plus, when a person started to figure the cost of one of these 'vacations', they ate through a whole year's worth of earnings in a very short time. Who would have ever thought that the day would come when we were using horses to farm and Lakin would put up hitching rails?

Those National Parks were in a sorry state anyway, this wasn't the Country of 30 years ago when everyone had 2 or 3 cars and gas was in the \$2 range. We would have been much better off if it weren't for the environmentalists. They complained about the volume of hydrocarbons in the air and drove gas guzzlers. When the Country tried to convert to wind power to eliminate carbon based fuel production of electricity, they worried about birds get killed by the wind turbines. Solar power was way overrated; consider the amount of energy it took to produce a solar panel. Many of the countries, like Japan, that produced them were not the industrial giants of the same time frame. North Korea sent all 10 of their warheads to Japan and the Chinese added a few, payback for WW II.

I half suspected that the planet Earth was in an overall population decline, the past 20 years had seen disease, war and hunger. We hadn't fully recovered from Yellowstone, yet. It was only 5 years since the super eruption and scientist had warned it would take 6-10 years for the air to completely clear. The Country had made it 246 years come the 4th of July, not a bad run. We were still the oldest Constitutional Republic on the planet. Now that we'd quit projecting our power, we might last a while longer. The last 2 wars, WW III and the war with México had been fought with nuclear weapons.

On the way home, June had also explained about Lassa. In areas of Africa where the disease was endemic (that is, constantly present), Lassa fever was a significant cause of morbidity and mortality. If it was carried by rodents, what would keep it from spreading to all of the states? It was like the Africanized honey bees, nothing could keep them from spreading north. Africanized Honey Bees (AHB) – also called "Africanized bees" or "killer bees" – are descendants of southern African bees imported in 1956 by Brazilian scientists attempting to breed a honey bee better adapted to the South American tropics.

The first swarm of Africanized bees was detected in the US in October, 1990 when they were captured in a baited trap at the border town of Hidalgo, Texas. AHB colonies were first reported in Arizona and New México in 1993 and in California in October, 1994. Within a year, more than 8,000 square miles of Imperial, Riverside and northeastern San Diego counties were declared officially colonized by Africanized Bees. In May of

1991, Jesus Diaz became the first person to be attacked by AHB in the US while mowing a lawn in the border city of Brownsville, Texas. Diaz suffered 18 stings and was treated at a local hospital. On July 15, 1993, 82-year-old Lino Lopez became the first person to die in the US from Africanized honey bee stings. He was stung more than 40 times while trying to remove a colony from a wall in an abandoned building on his ranch near Harlingen, Texas. How would it be any different if a killer disease had infected the rodent population?

◦

The Black Death ended, mostly, with the great fire of London in 1666 when most of the population of black rats was wiped out. The brown rats weren't good hosts for the fleas that carried the bubonic plague. The reservoir, or host, of Lassa virus is a rodent known as the "multimammate rat" of the genus *Mastomys*. It is not certain which species of *Mastomys* are associated with Lassa; however, at least two species carry the virus in Sierra Leone. *Mastomys* rodents breed very frequently, produce large numbers of offspring, and are numerous in the savannas and forests of West, Central, and East Africa. In addition, *Mastomys* generally readily colonize human homes. All these factors together contribute to the relatively efficient spread of Lassa virus from infected rodents to humans.

I had to wonder what had changed. Which rodent in the US was close enough to the *Mastomys* to carry the virus? The *Praomys*/*Mastomys* species complex is a group of morphologically similar species that occur in very diverse habitats throughout sub-Saharan Africa. The taxonomy of this group has been clouded by a diversity of opinions and this confusion has been further compounded by many external and cranial similarities between species, and thus the systematics of this group remains poorly understood, with many species yet to be described. The genus *Mastomys* is well represented in southern Africa, especially by the ubiquitous multimammate mice, *Mastomys coucha* and *Mastomys natalensis*. The distribution of both species is only provisional at this stage, and the species are known to be sympatric in some areas, and allopatric in others. These common agricultural pests are also commensal with man, often sheltering in houses in order to safely rear their young. In African kraals they occur in very large numbers, living in the fabric and thatch of pole and mud huts.



## The Odyssey – Chapter 10

Because these mice carry important diseases, the medical implications of this cohabitation with man are obvious. *Mastomys coucha* acts as a reservoir for the Rickettsian *Yersinia pestis*, the organism causing plague. The three forms of plague are bubonic, primary pneumonic and primary septicaemic. Bubonic plague, which is the most common type in epidemics, is fatal in about 25% to 50% of untreated cases. Pneumonic plague, a highly contagious (airborne) form, and septicaemic plague, a generalised blood infection, are more rare forms, and usually fatal. Plague still exists as a threat in southern Africa, with much current concern over the possibility of outbreaks in rat-infested inner cities.

◦

We had already had a round of pneumonic plague, during the H5N1 pandemic, introduced by terrorists; or, so was claimed. At the time, Randy and I had concerned ourselves more with treatment than the validity of the claims about the source (vector). I'm now wondering if the vector had simply been an infected traveler.

◦

Both species are also carriers of the Banzi and Witwatersrand viruses and *M. natalensis* is a natural reservoir for the arenavirus causing Lassa fever. This infection, occurring predominantly in West Africa up until now, has a high mortality rate, especially amongst pregnant women and even in patients with modern health care. The Mopeia virus is another similar virus carried by *M. natalensis*, but the effect thereof on man is as yet unknown. *Mastomys* rodents were also linked to an outbreak of encephalomyocarditis (EMC) among African elephants in the Kruger National Park. However, due to the fact that both species occur within the boundaries of the park, it is uncertain as to whether only one or both of these species may carry the EMC virus.

It kind of gives a whole new meaning to Indiana Jones saying, "Oh, rats!" On our way back we passed through Gallup, New México and I saw one store selling US 666 road signs. I immediately thought of Revelations Chapter 13, verse 18. I asked the guy at the counter about the sign. He appeared to be a foreigner, from perhaps, India.

"Oh that. Let me give you a handout:"

The association with the "beast" earned US 666 the nickname "Devil's Highway." USA Today quoted a State trooper who recalled one drunken-driving suspect on US 666 who told him, "Triple 6 is evil. Everyone dies on that highway" (August 4, 1990). The Wall Street Journal titled an article "Beast of a Highway: Does Asphalt Stretch Have Biblical Curse?" (August 3, 1995). Referring to the highway's dangers, the article quoted a resident who "blames Satan. After all, 'the highway has the devil's name.'" It was also the subject of a cartoon in The New Yorker's issue of February 23/March 2, 1998 (a Corvette-type open top sports car is passing the US 666 sign; the driver and his passenger

are depicted as satanic figures).

On January 21, 2003, Governor Bill Richardson delivered his first State-of-the-State Address to the New México Legislature. The new Governor discussed many topics of importance to his State, including the fate of US 666:

*We must coordinate the business interests of Native Americans and the state. After years of neglect in Santa Fe, I am proud to announce my wholehearted support for the renovation of Highway 666 (a name we are working to change) from Gallup to Shiprock, on the Navajo Nation, and I have directed the secretary of transportation to cooperate fully with the Navajo Nation in this effort.*

It was the death knell for "666."

The New Mexico State Highway and Transportation Department joined with Colorado and Utah transportation officials in submitting a recommendation to eliminate the last remaining segments of US 666 and establish a new route, US 393, in its place. After summarizing the history of the route, New Mexico's application explained the reason for the change:

There has been such an outcry from people living on or near US 66 in New Mexico and from the traveling public who avoid traveling on US 666, that House Joint Memorial 60 and Senate Joint Memorial 49 were passed by the 2003 Legislature of the State of New México, to request assignment of a new designation for US 666 as quickly as possible.

The identical Joint Memorial Resolutions described US 666 as "the site of many accidents," noting that "although the rate of accidents has decreased due to road improvements, it is still a dangerous stretch of highway." Then the resolutions got to the point:

WHEREAS, people living near the road already live under the cloud of opprobrium created by having a road that many believe is cursed running near their homes and through their homeland; and

WHEREAS, the number "666" carries the stigma of being the mark of the beast, the mark of the devil, which was described in the book of revelations in the Bible; and

HEREAS, there are people who refuse to travel the road, not because of the issue of safety, but because of the fear that the devil controls events along United States route 666; and

WHEREAS, the economy in the area is greatly depressed when compared with many parts of the United States, and the infamy brought by the inopportune naming of the road will only make development in the area more difficult.

Based on these considerations, the Joint Memorial Resolutions requested a new numeric designation as quickly as possible, adding that, "changing the numeric designa-

tion of United States route 666 would provide an added degree of comfort for those using the road."

New Mexico's application explained why the three States had settled on US 393 as the new number:

Renumbering US 666 to US 393 would keep changes to the branch route consistent with the elimination of US 66. US 666 is also a north south route, and therefore should have an odd route number, rather than an even route number.

Before considering "393," the States had apparently thought about basing the new number on the fact that the northern terminus of US 666 was its intersection with US 191 at Monticello, Utah. However, because the numbers 191, 291, and 391 were used for State routes in New Mexico or Colorado, the States concluded they could not maintain the numbering sequence for variants of US 191.

They chose 393, which was not in use in any of the three States. The problem was that the number implied that the highway was a branch of US 93 (Port of Roosville, Montana, to Wickenburg, Arizona) even though neither US 666 nor US 191 intersected US 93. Moreover, US 93 did not have any branches; if AASHTO were to number branches of US 93 in sequence, the first would be US 193, not 393.

At the suggestion of AASHTO, the States agreed to renumber the route as a spur of US 191, with "491" chosen to avoid duplicating State route numbers. After AASHTO's Standing Committee on Highways approved the change, it became official on Saturday, May 31.

"The sign is \$50, want it?"

"You're not a Christian are you?"

"Hindu."

"No thank you." (I wonder if California ever issued a license plate number 4SIN666.)

o

Dan and Mom came dragging in not many days after I talked to her. I did look at the CDC website, but couldn't tell if it was Lassa fever or not. She's the paramedic, not me. However, I was giving some thought to taking the EMT-1 class being offered in Garden City. They had both EMT-1 and EMT-2, but I wasn't sure I wanted to spend a year become a Paramedic, I had Julia and our 3 kids to take care of. Oh, yeah, Julia had another baby, a girl we named Julia. I went to Lakin and got myself clipped, 3 were enough kids and we only had a 3 bedroom house.

"EMT-1? Good, when you become a Paramedic, I can retire."

"Mom, I don't know about Paramedic training, I was only planning on EMT-2."

"Jim as smart as you are, the school should be a breeze. Remember, I was 51 years old when I went to school. It wasn't so much that the material was hard as it was my brain being old."

"I don't know, with the new baby..."

"She'll be just fine, think she'll forget you during the year you're off to school?"

"No, but we're farming with horses now. That's a lot of work."

"We have our Tejanos and the other hired hands, Jim. The corporation will pay for school if you decide to go."

"What about that bug they have in California?"

"They haven't said yet, but I found the Lassa fever fact sheet on the laptop and I think it's the likely candidate."

"We don't have that species of rodents here."

"We could have if a pregnant female made the trip on that ship from Africa. They might be able to survive in the desert southwest."

"What about the quarantine?"

"Mice and rats can't read. We already have those Africanized bees, if there are rodents from Africa here, maybe they're Marines."

"Huh?"

"They've learned to improvise, adapt and overcome."

"Where are you planning to go next year, New York?"

"We discussed that on the way home and I think our odysseys are over. If we go to a place like New York, we'd probably be attacked by mutant zombies. Besides, I've seen all of the rocks I need to see in this life."

"What were you waiting for in Kingman?"

"Didn't I tell you? Gunny hooked up with an old friend at MCLB, Barstow and got some ammo for the two Tac-50s."

"Expensive?"

"Very and the guys shipped twice as much as Gunny asked for, 1,200 rounds of .50 caliber. To top it off, the price went up by 50% so Dan and Gunny had to dig deep."

"I meant to tell you, we need more parts for the big wind turbine."

"Stuff we can get or not?"

"Bearings and brakes. I went up to Leoti and talked to Jake. He said they'd try to find them."

"Did they?"

"I haven't heard back. You know sometimes I wonder about things Mom. What does it all mean? We had a succession of disasters and wars. The pastor keeps bring up the 4 Horsemen of the Apocalypse and the End of Times. Some of those reruns on TV Say this and that and any one of the disasters we've had seem to qualify as what they warn about. We've had the plague and World War III. Yellowstone blew up and we made it through that. We nuked México and now we have some kind of pest in California. Is the end coming or not?"

"Jim we haven't seen the half of what could happen. La Palma hasn't slid into the ocean, yet. Long Valley didn't have the projected Supervolcano, yet. We've had famine but not on the scale we could have. I believe that the first 4 seals were broken at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. Look back and it all fits. However, the Bible also says that only God will know the minute and hour of the end. Don't hurry what's coming; they haven't built the third Temple, yet. The missiles Iran launched on Jerusalem took out the Dome on the Rock so the Jews may have started."

"What are you talking about?"

"Revelations, Chapter 11, verse 1. Look it up, how can you measure the Temple if it doesn't exist?"

o

The movie that *Time is on my side* was in was *Fallen* (1998) starring Denzel Washington. Very scary movie.

o

Jim getting me thinking about Revelations slipped into me thinking about some of the implications. We'd learned in school that results of a nationally representative study show that genital herpes infection is common in the United States. Nationwide, at least 45 million people ages 12 and older, or one out of five adolescents and adults, have had

genital HSV infection. Between the late 1970s and the early 1990s, the number of Americans with genital herpes infection increased 30 percent. I'm talking about HSV-2 here and what does that say about the morality of this nation? HSV-1 is what we usually call cold sores or fever blisters.

I hoped Jim became a Paramedic; I could retire completely once I showed him how to use the lab equipment. If I started that now, maybe he would become interested in going to school for a year. Then he could work in Garden City for a year and return to the farm, like I had. Of course, I'd brought back more to the farm than an education when I gave up my job.

Twenty years ago international news was usually the first news the media brought to our attention, it was shortly after 9/11. We had gone in Afghanistan looking for Osama and ended up removing the Taliban from power, but Osama evaded us. We'd eventually heard that bin Laden was dead, but we'd found him and SEAL Team 6 killed him. Africa had been starving for years and the pandemic, the war and the Israeli attack on Muslim countries only worsened their conditions. If anything helped them it was Yellowstone erupting, it ended the drought in Africa.

The US had tried more than once to help starving countries in Africa but each attempt had ended badly. Clinton pulled us out of Somalia and Bush only made a halfhearted attempt to help those starving in '05-'06. That affected Somalia, Sudan, Niger and Chad. Some of the problem was drought and the remaining locusts.

The 4 Horsemen are the white horse – the Antichrist, the red horse – war, the black horse – famine and the pale horse – death, which would naturally follow the first 3. Opinions on which rider carried pestilence, an alternate interpretation, likely based on differing translations, holds the first Horseman to represent War or the Antichrist, the second to represent Pestilence, while the third and fourth riders remain famine and death, respectively.

o

The Caddo and the Comanche weren't the only tribes in Texas. Here's a fuller list:

Apache an important late comer to Texas  
Akokisasa part of the Atakapans  
Atakapan coastal Indians of east Texas  
Alabama Couthatta Late comers from the east, still here in east Texas  
Bidas a part of Atakapans  
Black (African) Seminoles Escaped slaves, adopted and married into the Seminoles  
Caddo East Texas farmers  
Coahuiltecans South Texas hunter gathers  
Comanche Raiders of the south plains  
Concho West Texas friends of the Jumano  
Cherokee Important late comers. Sam Houston's tribe.

Deadosea part of the Atakapans  
Han a part of the Atakapans  
Huacos same as the Waco, see Waco below  
Jumano Wide ranging Puebloan traders from west Texas  
Karankawa The coastal people  
Kickapoo From way up north, passed through, have one of two reservations in Texas  
Kiowa North Texas plains Indians.  
Patarabuay, another name for the Jumanos  
Pueblo, see the Tigua for Texas Puebloan Indians  
Méxican - Hispanic they are Indian too  
Tigua The Pueblos of Texas  
Tonkawa central Texas hunter gathers. Hosts of the crossroads of Indian Texas.  
Waco a band of the Wichita  
Wichita farmers and hunters of central Texas

o

The only way the end would come all at once if that rock came in from behind the sun. Statistically, every morning when you get up, there's 1 chance in 20,000 that it could happen. Only God knows when, and how. I started reading the signs after I lost the baby and couldn't have more. Revelations also says that there will be a great upsurge in knowledge just before the end. That could put the 4 horsemen as far back in time as the Renaissance. I don't think so, the 1,000 years of tribulation comes AFTER the battle of Har Megiddon. On the other hand, the 20th Century seems to qualify also. If we'd already had the 7th seal opened, I think I would have read about it in the paper or it would have been on TV.

It was planting time, again, and I took care of baby Julia while Jim worked on the farm and Julia worked in the gardens and cannery. One of these days, our vehicles would be worn out and we'd be walking or riding a horse. Jim did get the parts for the wind turbine from Big Jake, but was told there weren't any more. The bearings were semi-standard and a substitute could be found, but what about those discs for the brakes? Like anything with brakes and bearings, the brake pads wore out first. We were in that period after the disasters where you have technology but no means to replace it when it wears out.

Knowing this, we could plan ahead and locate parts before they were needed. A task, I should point out, that was getting harder every year. If properly cared for some things, like computers, have a very long life. And you could always replace the part most likely to wear out, the HDD. Technological advances had come to a screeching halt on July 4th, 2009. We were coming up on July 4th, 2022, 13 years after the war and ~5 years after Yellowstone. We'd seen enough of the Country to know that we didn't want to travel anymore.

*The CDC announced today that the unidentified illness affecting California is Lassa fever. A vaccine was developed and is being produced to meet the needs of the popula-*

*tion of that state and its contiguous neighbors, Arizona, Nevada and Oregon. The disease vector is rodents and it requires contact with the virus to become infected. In anticipation of the disease possibly spreading, sufficient doses of the vaccine will be prepared to immunize the entire remaining population of the United States. Eradication of the rodent population being deemed 'impossible'.*

"Tom Cruise is never around when you need him, kiddo."

"That was just the movies, Marilyn."

"Yeah, huh? So when do we get our shots?"

"It may be several months, I'd imagine they'll work their way east with the vaccine."

"If they can develop a vaccine for Lassa, how come they can't develop a vaccine for Ebola?"

"They're not sure which animal is the reservoir. It seems to be spread by human contact with an infected animal and amplified in health care settings. Ebola is a Filoviridae virus while Lassa is an Arenaviridae virus."

"Different bug, huh?"

"I think I just said that. We don't want Ebola in our population; it's a much worse virus."

"Who is going to take your place when you retire?"

"Jim. He's taking EMT-1 now and plans to take EMT-2. I'm trying to talk him into becoming a Paramedic. If I succeed, he'd go to school in the fall and then work for a year in Garden City."

"Rachel didn't get freaked this time."

"True, but there is no real cure for depression; it's a chemical imbalance in the brain that can be treated but rarely cured."

"It's not catching is it?"

"Best guess is that it has a genetic factor of some kind related to serotonin and norepinephrine. The newest SNRI available is Cymbalta."

"Rachel takes Zoloft."

"It's a SSRI, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor. SNRI is a serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor and a selective norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor is called a NRI. My biggest concern is what I'm going to use when we can't get Zoloft any more. Natural



healing professionals often recommend 5-HTP supplements instead of standard SSRI/MAOI prescriptions as 5-HTP allegedly accomplishes the same goal without resorting to disturbing the brain's natural metabolic procedures. Instead of interrupting the recycling of serotonin as in the case of SSRIs, and instead of preventing the end consumption of serotonin as in the case of MAOIs, 5-HTP supplements provide more raw materials that may be used in the body's natural serotonin production process. I'd imagine we'll go to that if it is available. Otherwise, Rachel is going to have to eat a lot of turkey to get the tryptophan."

"We should grow those."

o

Mom told me that Marilyn suggested that we grow turkeys because they contained some chemical that would help Rachel with her depression. Why the hell not, we were growing everything else. I finally gave in and told her that I'd enroll in Paramedic school this fall, provided we could find one. Me and my big mouth, she handed me an application. I should have known she wouldn't have pushed if there wasn't a school I could attend.

"Turkeys?"

"Talk to Mom, Dan, it was her idea. Well actually it was Marilyn's but she suggested it. Sometimes it's hard to tell if she is suggesting or giving orders. I understand your traveling days are over."

"That's what we had planned on Jim, but plans don't always work out. Juan and Manny want us to go south to Big Bend Country again."

"You'd better buy a smaller freezer and take some FFP with you this time."

"We'll go through the munitions hut and take about half of the supplies, if we do go. You can keep the other half up here to defend the home place."

"I won't be here, Mom talked me into Paramedic school."

"Well good for you. I've always been concerned because she was the only one on the 3 farms that had more than Combat Lifesaver training. See if you can take course on homeopathic cures, we aren't always going to be able to get drugs. June and I talked about the fact that pharmaceuticals are getting harder to find."

"Is that why you bought those bows and all of the arrows?"

"Yes and it's also why we laid in a big supply of repair parts for the generators. Technology is great but one of these days it's going to run out. Your generation may well be the last one to have access to large amounts of technology. I don't know if you know it

Jim, but your foster mother has been printing out everything on those computers for the days for when the last HDD crashes. That's what she has in all of those ring binders she's been filling. That ammo that we picked up from Gunny's friend may be the last we can get. I asked Tom to milk every source he has to buy more."

"They make the 5.56 and the 7.62 in Missouri don't they?"

"Yes they do at the Lake City Plant and he knows some people at the plant. We can buy overruns when they're available. The mortar and grenade production was shifted to the Milan Army Ammunition Plant in Tennessee and he knows some people there, too."

"Are you sure you want to go back to Texas?"

"Not really, but duty calls. Very pretty Country and this time it won't be us against the Mexican Army but the Tejanos against the illegal immigrants."

"What's going on with that?"

"Manny said they needed some help with a couple of hot spots where the illegals have the locals outnumbered and are trying to take over the show. We'll mainly be involved in advising them on the best approaches to solving particular problems and I don't think we'll be directly involved in any action."

"When are you going?"

"After the crops are all gathered. Jason will have to take care of the bourbon and bio-diesel operations this year with John's help."

"Y'all be careful."

"Hey, I'm not John Rambo. The only relationship I have to him is that I bought some of those reproduction *First Blood* knives. They aren't half bad, as long as you use them for what they were intended for."

o

"Jim says we should take FFP with us when we go to Texas."

"And just when are we going to Texas? I thought after that last trip to California we agreed our traveling days were over."

## The Odyssey – Chapter 11

"Manny and Juan need some help. All we'd be is advisers. We talked it over and decided we owed them."

"We? Who are we?"

"Gunny, Hank, Tom and me."

"And you were planning on us ladies going with you?"

"I would be nice, yes."

"Where in Texas?"

"Big Bend County and that general area. There are a couple of communities down there that the illegals are taking over. Their friends called them and they agreed to go. Manny and Juan asked us to join them to provide advice on the best approaches to any problems they might encounter."

"What's this about FFP? If you're not going to be involved in combat, why would you need that?"

"As a precaution?"

"Right, put them on 250ml of improperly thawed FFP and add a Band-Aid, right?"

"But you once told me that FFP was better than Ringer's."

"You don't see any FFP in any of the CLS packs, do you? You need equipment to properly thaw the product, too."

"Will you equip one of the trailer tents or a pickup?"

"Only if we are going with you. Otherwise, slap on an ACS, establish an IV with Ringer's and transport to the nearest medical facility ASAP."

"Will you go with us?"

"I'll have to talk to Marilyn, I'll let you know. When are you planning on going?"

"After the crops are harvested."

o

"Dan asked me to go to Texas with them?"

"Just you?"

"No, all four of us."

"I guess that's why Deke has been acting sort of strange lately."

"It would be more of the stuff like we ran into in Big Bend Country only this time they were going looking for trouble and although Dan claims they won't be directly involved, you know men."

"Always looking for another fight?"

"My thoughts, exactly."

"What about Rachel, can she handle it?"

"I'll start her on something before we leave. She's accustomed to it now and it doesn't zone her out quite as badly."

"We're sharing a trailer with you?"

"Worked out well the last time didn't it? Elle doesn't much care for Hank so it's a perfect pairing."

"I think we should plan on 2 of those 6-horse trailers so we have room for everything we need. We can haul 800-gallons of extra fuel, use one stall for freezers or whatever and that will leave more room in the pickups for a better selection of food. I don't much care for a lot of the beans and rice. How long will we be gone?"

"Dan didn't say."

"After Christmas?"

"Before, as soon as the harvest is in."

"In that case, we better plan for..."

"Six months?"

"I suppose kiddo, and we'd better get to town and start stocking up on supplies."

"I suppose I'd better call Arkansas and order rice."

"I'll get the big truck and go after the other things; what do you think 30 bundles of toilet paper? These men of ours are as full of it as the Christmas goose."

"We'll have turkey to take this year."

"Good, don't tell anyone, but I don't like fish."

◦

Jim was putting in long days and nights because of the EMT training. It was good for him and I sent his completed application along with payment in full to Topeka. Buying another freezer for FFP didn't make a whole lot of sense, yet, and I had all the equipment we needed. We could haul 6 horses in one trailer and 4 in the other, leaving room for all the freezers and stuff we needed. Of course that meant getting a second 6 horse trailer, but it was only money. I could say that now, it wasn't like back when Randy and I first got into preparedness. The only problem I could see with 20 and 30-year men was that they never stopped being soldiers.

Production was up a little this year and in another 4-5 years we'd be back to normal, provided the weather holds. Dylan was right, the times were a changing. Back when I was an 18-year-old in the Army, I never thought I'd see the day where the end times became a reality. This trip, I think I'll wear the Chief's Special in my ankle holster and carry the HD .45 as my backup in the middle of my back. That's regardless of what guns I'm carrying, the military arms or the cowboy guns. It's just a shame I'm not bigger in stature, I end up carrying about 50% of my weight in gear when I'm all fitted out in the military gear. Rachel and I are close to the same size, but she barely weighs 100 pounds and pecks at her food like a bird. Marilyn and Elle are about the same size, 5'9, maybe 135 pounds. Pretty fit for a bunch of old broads, huh?

One day in mid-June, a military truck pulled in and the driver said he had a delivery for Tom. I ask where he was from and he said he came from Tennessee, but made a stop in Missouri on the way to pick up more goods. What did they buy now? Obviously more munitions, but why, were they expecting WW IV? It was a 5-ton truck and it was full, I wonder how much that stuff cost.

"What did you buy now?"

"More ammo. You seem to think you can never have too much toilet paper and I think that you can never have too much ammo. Tom lined up production overruns from Milan Army Ammunition Plant in Tennessee and Lake City Army Ammunition Plant in Missouri. Was that another ton of rice they delivered?"

"Yes, don't change the subject. I thought you were only going to be advisors to our Tejanos."

"That's right, but Tom has the contacts to get the munitions and I have the feeling that we might not see much more. You must agree or you wouldn't be printing out all of those files on the computers and assembling them into ring binders."

"I guess you're right Dan, I don't see industry returning the way I once thought it would. Marilyn and I were discussing remedies and I commented that I was going to start looking into homeopathic medicines."

"Have you heard anything more about that vaccine they were talking about on TV?"

"No, but I'm sure it will be available before we leave for Texas."

"Did you find a portable FFP freezer?"

"I'm just going to take the one I have. I ordered a new 6-horse trailer so we can take two of them. You'll have to move the stuff from the 4 horse trailer to the new one, but only plan on using 4 of the stalls for horses. I'll use one stall for my medical storage and maybe we'll use the second for 400-gallons of biodiesel. You didn't say how long you had planned on being gone."

"For as long as it takes. They only mentioned a couple of hot spots so maybe a month."

"Or, maybe six?"

"It shouldn't take that long."

"We can't call for reinforcements this time, so we'd better plan on taking all we will need. Marilyn and I decided on taking 6 months' worth of supplies. She's loading up on toilet paper because she says you guys are full of it."

"We planned on taking half of the weapons and munitions. The Tejanos can haul them in trailers with them."

"Maybe my FFP freezer isn't big enough."

"How much does it hold?"

"12 units."

"Can you get more in Texas?"

"With a prescription, probably."

"Talk to the doctor in Lakin and get prescriptions for more."

"I'm thinking of adding packed red blood cells."

"In the past, people with Type O/Rh negative blood were considered universal blood donors. This implied that anyone, regardless of blood type, could receive Type O Rh

negative blood without risking a transfusion reaction. But scientists now have a much better understanding of the complex issues related to reactions to incompatible blood donor types. Even donors with Type O Rh negative blood may have antibodies in their blood that cause serious reactions. Before a blood transfusion, small samples of the recipient's and donor's blood are mixed to check compatibility. Doctors refer to this as cross-matching. Despite these precautions, an adverse reaction may still occur."

"So, what do you carry?"

"I don't have much choice; I carry plasma derived from universal plasma donors, type AB. However, I'll get type O for red cells. I'll have to add normal saline to administer the packed RBCs."

"Why?"

"Solutions not approved for addition to blood components or for simultaneous administration via the same intravenous line include lactated Ringer's solution, 5% dextrose in water, and hypotonic sodium chloride solutions. Dextrose solution may cause red cells to clump in the tubing and, more important, to swell and hemolyze as dextrose and associated water diffuse from the medium into the cells. Lactated Ringer's solution contains enough ionized calcium (3mEq/L) to overcome the chelating agents in anticoagulant-preservative or additive solutions and allow small clots to develop. There have been complications reported with massive infusions of saline-containing solutions. These clinical complications include dilutional acidosis, edema, and hypokalemia. That's unless you're doing a rapid transfusion. In that case..."

"Excuse me, I'm sorry I asked. Just get whatever you need and you deal with the little in's and out's."

"Mix me a drink and I'll show you all about in's and out's."

o

The last time we went to Texas, we didn't have CCWs. Not a problem this time and Kansas and Texas acknowledged each other's. Because I had so much room in the horse trailer, I changed my mind, ladies have been known to do that, and got a larger FFP freezer, capable of handling 72 units. I never the less insisted that we loan the Dragon Skin to our Tejano friends, I didn't want to use it, just because I had it. The corporation was clearing at least \$300,000 or more a year now and it was akin to winning the lottery. Donating the 6-month-old FFP to Lakin Hospital was a nice tax write-off.

That was very important, you know, \$100,000 wasn't what it used to be, not with a pound of gold officially valued at \$15,000. With Jim in school and the 8 of us gone this fall and winter, Jason was going to earn every penny of his salary and 5%. I guess we finally managed to saturate Lakin with pint and quart mason jars; we got all we needed this season back. And, you know how much that cuts our costs and increases our prof-

its.

"How long have you been taking the Xanax, now Rachel?"

"About a month, why?"

"We have something to tell you girl," Marilyn said patting her on the arm, "We're going to Texas this fall."

"Did the Indians get it back?" Rachel asked.

"Which Indians?"

"The Cheyenne."

o

Floyd 'Red Crow' Westerman plays a Cherokee in *Walker, Texas Ranger*, although he is a Lakota. Having seen the movie, *Cheyenne Autumn*, I thought the *Trail of Tears* referred to the Cheyenne being moved to Oklahoma. The *Trail of Tears* refers to the forced movement of the Cherokee from north Georgia to Oklahoma.

Hollywood has left the impression that the great Indian wars came in the Old West during the late 1800's, a period that many think of simplistically as the *cowboy and Indian* days. But in fact that was a *mopping up* effort. By that time the Indians were nearly finished, their subjugation complete, their numbers decimated. The killing, enslavement, and land theft had begun with the arrival of the Europeans. But it may have reached its nadir when it became federal policy under President (Andrew) Jackson.

*I would sooner be honestly damned than hypocritically immortalized* – Davy Crockett – His political career destroyed because he supported the Cherokee, he left Washington DC and headed west to Texas.

About 4000 Cherokee died as a result of the removal. The route they traversed and the journey itself became known as *The Trail of Tears* or, as a direct translation from Cherokee, *The Trail Where They Cried (Nunna daul Tsuny)*. There are actually three trails, not one.

No better symbol exists of the pain and suffering of the *Trail Where They Cried* than the Cherokee Rose. The mothers of the Cherokee grieved so much that the chiefs prayed for a sign to lift the mother's spirits and give them strength to care for their children. From that day forward, a beautiful new flower, a rose, grew wherever a mother's tear fell to the ground. The rose is white, for the mother's tears. It has a gold center, for the gold taken from the Cherokee lands, and seven leaves on each stem that represent the seven Cherokee clans that made the journey. To this day, the Cherokee Rose prospers along the route of the *Trail of Tears*. The Cherokee Rose is now the official flower of the



State of Georgia.

◦

"The Cheyenne aren't from Texas, Rachel; it's the Comanche's and the Kiowa."

"Dustin Hoffman is an Indian, I saw the movie. He was a Cheyenne, a human being."

"No. Dustin Hoffman is from Los Angeles and he's a Polish Jew, but he is a human being."

"That's what I just said."

"How many Xanax have you taken today, Rachel?"

"I'm on a week from next Thursday."

"You can skip them entirely tomorrow."

"Skip what?"

"The Xanax."

"Why, I'm not depressed?"

◦

July 1, 1967

Empire Stadium, Vancouver BC

*How long have I known you, Oh Canada? A hundred years? Yes, a hundred years. And many many seelanium [lunar months] more. And today, when you celebrate your hundred years, Oh Canada, I am sad for all the Indian people throughout the land.*

*For I have known you when your forests were mine; when they gave me my meat and my clothing. I have known you in your streams and rivers where your fish flashed and danced in the sun, where the waters said come, come and eat of my abundance. I have known you in the freedom of your winds. And my spirit, like the winds, once roamed your good lands.*

*But in the long hundred years since the white man came, I have seen my freedom disappear like the salmon going mysteriously out to sea. The white man's strange customs which I could not understand pressed down upon me until I could no longer breathe.*

*When I fought to protect my land and my home, I was called a savage. When I neither understood nor welcomed this way of life, I was called lazy. When I tried to rule my*

*people, I was stripped of my authority.*

*My nation was ignored in your history textbooks – they were little more important in the history of Canada than the buffalo that ranged the plains. I was ridiculed in your plays and motion pictures, and when I drank your fire-water, I got drunk – very, very drunk. And I forgot.*

*Oh Canada, how can I celebrate with you this Centenary, this hundred years? Shall I thank you for the reserves that are left to me of my beautiful forests? For the canned fish of my rivers? For the loss of my pride and authority, even among my own people? For the lack of my will to fight back? No! I must forget what's past and gone.*

*Oh God in Heaven! Give me back the courage of the olden Chiefs. Let me wrestle with my surroundings. Let me again, as in the days of old, dominate my environment. Let me humbly accept this new culture and through it rise up and go on.*

*Oh God! Like the Thunderbird of old I shall rise again out of the sea; I shall grab the instruments of the white man's success – his education, his skills, and with these new tools I shall build my race into the proudest segment of your society.*

*Before I follow the great Chiefs who have gone before us, Oh Canada, I shall see these things come to pass. I shall see our young braves and our chiefs sitting in the houses of law and government, ruling and being ruled by the knowledge and freedoms of our great land.*

*So shall we shatter the barriers of our isolation? So shall the next hundred years be the greatest in the proud history of our tribes and nations? – Teswahno*

Don't recognize the name? He was also known as Chief Dan George – Old Lodge Skins in *Little Big Man*. That's his Lament for Confederation.

◦

The thing about the Indians of North America was that they would have the last laugh. We came from Europe and stole their land. We were civilized, they were savages. Or, so we told ourselves. We killed them with our diseases, stole their land and moved them to places they didn't want to go called Reservations. It was the despised land, that which we didn't want, like Oklahoma. They started to chuckle when we found oil and repaid the Cherokee for the *Trail of Tears*. I wasn't that long ago that Dan passed out bows and arrows for Christmas. Our technology doomed us and one day, we'll have used the last grain of gun powder and be hunting with bows and arrows, much as the Indians once did. The people of México were once Indians, Aztec, Mayan and others. They will be again. There won't be cloth and we'll make our clothing out of skins, as the Indians once did. He who laughs last laughs longest. It is a proverb.

o

We busied ourselves throughout the summer, enjoying Independence Day and Labor Day. At the end of the day when work was done, we worked on getting ready for the trip to Texas. I had a very bad feeling about this trip. We'd been there and almost ended up fighting the Mexican Army but for the fact that an F-15E dropped a bomb and stopped them dead in their tracks, literally. They dropped a lot of bombs that day and luckily, neither Russia nor China reacted. They just continued to sell the surviving Mexicans whatever they needed to rebuild their Country. And Mexico paid for what they needed with oil. So much so that their price of gasoline went up to match the price of gas in the US.

Mexico was lucky; the US only bombed the states across the border from the US. Far enough south so that very little radiation came north. It created a nearly perfect fence in a way, the overlapping fields of radioactivity made the best possible fence. Unfortunately, they planned poorly, parts of the US extended south of the line of radioactivity. They were airbursts reducing the fallout, but still... there was this strip across Texas just north of Big Bend Country. It touched New Orleans and Central Florida, too. The US uses fairly 'clean' bombs and most, but not all, of the radiation is associated with a ground burst.

We'd have lost our radios if they hadn't been protected. Not that we knew what was coming, because it was a total surprise to us. It takes a very high airburst for the widespread EMP effect to take place and we didn't lose much. Manny told us that we'd be wise to take some kind of protective clothing although it had been 2 years. We bought kits that included the Suit, 1 pair of protective gloves and boot covers and 1 roll of duct tape. DEMRON™ RADIATION SHIELDING GARMENTS had been tested by the Department of Energy and confirmed to be effective in shielding for various forms of ionizing radiation. The specific molecular engineering of the compound provides significant protection against X-ray and low energy Gamma emissions, as well as high and low energy Beta and Alpha particles. It is also highly resistant to chemical vapors. The DEMRON™ coverall is constructed with an integrated hood, heat sealed seams, and seam seal tape for added protection. The kits were not cheap, but they were in stock.

It was only after the suits were delivered that Dan pointed out that we could have worn MOPP (Mission Oriented Protective Posture) suits. Right, in southern Texas! Ok, so it's going to be the fall and with winter coming, but a MOPP suit is hot and heavy and just plain uncomfortable. The lightweight suits I bought would offer the same protection as a MOPP suit and possibly more. We'd use the military gas masks, MCU-2/P.

We were well into September before we were ready, but when the harvesting was done, we completed last minute preparations, like the FFP & PRBCs for example, and off we headed to Texas with the Tejanos leading the way. They had a survey meter in the lead vehicle which was carrying munitions. It wouldn't hurt the munitions to be exposed to radioactivity if there were any, whereas, the horses weren't all geldings.

Another thing, those radiation suits – \$1,300 each and that didn't count the gas mask.

Between the food, medical supplies, suits, spare radios, additional trailer and everything we'd spent 30-40 grand before we left home. This time I inventoried the bourbon and limited the total to 6 cases, a one year supply. I also made sure we didn't have more than 3 kegs of the liquid dynamite Ray called beer. Same rule, prepare for the worst and hope for the best and if we did find ourselves defending ourselves, we were going to be bright-eyed and bushy-tailed.

The drive was the same distance going as it had been coming, 650 miles. About 13 hours driving straight through. This time we had reservations at Terlingua Ranch's campground, we made back in July. When the subject of our boarding horses came up, they finally remembered us. We passed through the radiation band and the survey meter never clicked so I guess we could save our radiation suits for WW IV. Our Tejanos spread out and got lodging with relatives. Manny and Juan told us they needed to gather information and would get back to us. We stabled the horses and began checking our equipment. Dan didn't say what they had in mind, but I intended to be ready. I had medical histories on all 44 of us and made sure that everyone was up to date on their shots including the new Lassa vaccine.

I had replaced the Ringers in the CLS bags and had plenty of it, normal saline, D5W and D5NS. Hospitals, I knew from previous experience, were few and far between. And we had stopped in Alpine and recorded our CCWs with the Sheriff. He was very impressed with those Tac-50 rifles that Dan and Gunny had. We didn't tell him we also had 1 Ma Deuce, 2 M240s and 4 M249s plus 2 60mm mortars. He's find out soon enough if we had to use them. We even had some of those M1060 40mm grenades, the new thermobaric rounds developed for use in Afghanistan. Our opposition could run, but they couldn't hide.

o

For the first time in memory, we went looking for trouble albeit in the guise of helping our Tejano friends. Thermobaric weapons are FAEs and they kill by sheer pressure. The media touted the GBU-43B as a FAE, but it wasn't. MOAB was filled with 18,700 pounds of H6, an explosive that is a mixture of RDX (Cyclotrimethylene trinitramine), TNT, and aluminum. Contrary to some published claims, it most certainly is not an Ethylene-Oxide Fuel-Air Explosive (FAE). Some initial reports had stated that this replacement for the BLU-82 bomb uses more of the slurry of ammonium nitrate and powdered aluminum used in the BLU-82. Other reports indicated that the MOAB might use tritonal explosive as opposed to the gelled slurry explosive of the BLU-82. Contrary to some reports, it is not capable of deep ground penetration.

The military could have used those 2 years earlier but they didn't. The reason being that they didn't have enough and our B61-10s were getting old and either had to be refurbished or used up. They chose the latter, apparently. The MOAB was built to use in Iraq, but they didn't use them for whatever reason.

## The Odyssey – Chapter 12

We waited while our allies gathered information and identified the targets of their campaign. We assumed it would be some of the cities along the Rio Grande, but life has its little surprises.

"These people have seized several small towns, places only locals have heard of and the populations of most of these towns are Anglo and Tejano. They've seized the towns and enslaved the residents. Places like Ft. Davis and Ft. Hancock; generally communities under 500, but not always."

"How many people do we have, Juan?" Gunny asked.

"Give or take, 130."

"Armed?"

"G-3s, AR-15s, Mini-14s, a little of everything."

"Anything besides rifles and handguns?"

"Si, dynamite."

"Y'all didn't hit any armories or anything?" Hank asked.

"Madre de Dios, we're the good guys."

"If you're the good guys, how come after a couple of hundred years in Texas you still speak Spanish?"

"It's just a bad habit, Tom. There's nothing wrong with our English. Not all of the ranch hands we worked with spoke English. Besides, many of the Anglo ranchers speak Spanish too."

"If we start small and work our way up to the bigger communities, we may increase our force. The residents may want to get even for the abuse they've suffered and we'll have the captured weapons to arm them with," Gunny pointed out.

"Unfortunately the news will spread and the people holding the bigger communities might be better prepared," Hank reasoned.

"I think we can provide sniper support. Our wives can act as spotters and we have the 2 Tac-50s, a Super Match and Gunny's M1A is pretty accurate."

"You just have to get involved, don't you Dan?"

"June I don't see as we have much of a choice. We're going to need to infiltrate the communities and we'll need sniper fire to cover the infiltrators. Gunny, what do you have on your Tac-50, the dual chamber detachable muzzle brake or the sound suppressor?"

"I have the muzzle brake on now, but it's easy to switch. What do you have on yours?"

"I have my Jet titanium suppressor."

"What's the sound reduction?"

"40db."

"What will the Surefire's do?"

"A little over 30db."

"Is there any advantage to using a suppressor?"

"They improve accuracy slightly and make it harder for the opposing force to identify your location. Carlos Hathcock didn't use suppressors in 'Nam, but he was making one shot kills and moving on. In terms of how to approach this, what would you say to our being positioned in 90° quadrants?"

What Dan told me they planned to do was set up snipers ~90° apart and they could use the Spearheads to coordinate the attacks of the infiltrators. That would place a heavy burden on the spotters to identify the individual targets that needed taking out. The infiltrators would try to do knife work and only use their suppressed handguns or rifles if that failed. A suppressor isn't totally silent, not like a knife. Some of our Tejano friends had some wicked looking Bowie's sharpened to a razor-like edge.

Assuming that even if we started with the smallest towns first, the final decision, we would most likely be out numbered, if not by bodies, then by position. I immediately started tapering Rachel off the Xanax; we didn't need a repeat performance of her Dustin Hoffman skit. And speaking of knives, Dan had Rambo I and I had a Kershaw Trooper. That's a knife not unlike the Fairbairn Sykes pattern and a double edged, 5¼" blade boot knife. About the right sized blade when you consider my size.

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We took our military arms, not the cowboy guns on this foray. We had spotting scopes to use plus a pair of binoculars for each sniper team. I didn't get the name of the town, but does it matter? Initial appearances were deceiving; it appeared to just be a normal small town with a few people going about their business. We'd tied our horses to some shrubs and had moved into position where we waited until the infiltrators signaled that they were ready to go. It was close to sundown and Dan was using the binoculars and pointing out targets of interest to me and the others. Once I knew what to look for I be-

gan to mark targets too.

If the operation came off as planned, we'd get through this with few, if any, shots being fired. What's that saying? No battle plan survives first contact with the enemy. It's one of Murphy's Military Laws. If your attack is going really well, it's an ambush. My favorite is, "Friendly fire ain't."

Using the information that came over the Spearheads, our people slowly moved into position, getting as close as they dared before dark.

"Go." Dan announced when he needed illumination to see his watch dial.

I watched them creep in, intent on their targets with an occasional twinkle when light caught the edge of a knife blade. I began to count 1-2...3-4-5-6...7...8-9-10. Just as the tenth guard was falling, blood gushing; a man walked out of a building and saw him go down. He swung up his G-3 rifle and all hell broke loose. Dan took him out with a well-placed shot.

"Chit," Gunny said on the radio.

"Gunny, if you can find a group of them, try the Mk 211 rounds."

"Gottacha kiddo," Marilyn replied for Gunny.

They were far enough away, we didn't hear the Tac-50 fire, but I saw the results, Gunny took out 4 men. Then one of our infiltrators fired his M203 and with a M1060 round and took out an entire building that had fire pouring from the windows. I was doing my best to mark where our people had gone down; you don't get into an all-out battle without losing people on both sides. One building had a sign reading Clinic and I hoped it was a medical clinic with a full time doctor. More likely it was one of those remote clinics where a doctor visited town and saw patients one day a week.

I'd take care of the opposition people only once I was sure our injured were out of danger. If someone else had other ideas, it would mean less work for me. Overall we were winning because of our superior weaponry. The suppressors on our sniper rifles eliminated the flash and those illegals had no idea where the sniper fire was coming from. We had 3rd generation night vision, MUNS, but it wasn't required, the town was reasonably well lit up. What we thought would take 30 minutes tops ended up taking the better part of an hour. Once we had their numbers down, it turned into a seek and destroy operation.

"Let's go help the wounded," Dan suggested.

"Ok, it's about time."

We saddled up and worked our way into town, there was almost no fire now. I went to

the first man down; he was dead from several rounds from that SOB with the G-3. Juan started to point out people who were still alive and I could see most of them had Ringer's and ACS bandages. We moved them to the clinic and I quickly triaged the men. Most would make it, but I'm only a Paramedic and a couple need surgery.

"Get the medical supplies, Dan. We have two people that need transport."

"What can you do for them?"

"Stabilize and transport, they need surgery."

"The closest hospital is in Alpine."

"They're going to look like pin cushions, I'll start a normal saline drip and infuse packed blood cells and send them with a plasma drip, if you'll hurry."

"Count?" Gunny asked.

"3 dead, 2 require surgery and 9 more with wounds we can handle. How many wounded from the other side?"

"Nada."

Not every wound is life threatening. Our people were wearing Dragon Skin body armor and most of the wounds were in the extremities. Unless a wound like that caused massive blood loss, I had time. I was able to direct some of the others exactly what to do and men with minor wounds were cleaned up, wounds debrided and bandages applied. As soon as they brought in the supplies, I began establish additional IVs, administering PRBCs and a plasma drip. I wasn't sure if they make it to Alpine, but Gunny had used his Iridium to call the Sheriff and a chopper was only a few minutes out. An extra Paramedic was aboard and he helped us finish up with the people who weren't being transported. The Sheriff had come along and was asking questions.

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"Just what in the hell did you people use on this bunch?"

"Which ones?"

"How about that building over there?"

"M1060."

"What's that?"

"A military 40mm grenade with a thermobaric charge. It is a FAE that sucks up all of the



air."

"What about those guys?"

"Mk 211 round."

"That's what you shoot in that Tac-50?"

"Either that or the 750gr Hornady A-MAX Match."

"Jesus, Joseph and Mary."

"Really?" Gunny asked, "We kicked butt but didn't take names."

"I haven't seen anything like this since I was in the military," the Sheriff continued.

"We didn't use the big guns, we didn't need them."

"I won't ask, because I don't think I want to know."

"But you're dying to know, right?" Gunny continued. "Let's just say we could have blown the town to kingdom come if we had no other choice."

"How many people did you lose?"

"3 dead and 2 transported up to Alpine. They're still counting how many people we set free."

"Any more places in my County? I don't know that I like a bunch of folks from Kansas messing in a local Texas Problem."

"No, we headed in the general direction of El Paso. As for our being here, tell that to Davy Crockett and his Tennessee Volunteers. "

"There are other places like this?"

"Si," Manny said, "Several."

"I don't know how we missed this."

"Sheriff, you wouldn't have seen it unless you were specifically looking for it," Manny replied.

"I'd better get a bulletin out on the law enforcement net. Manny, tell me what to look for."

The 3 dead and 2 seriously wounded men weren't any of our 36 people, but some oth-

ers that had joined in to help. Some of the less seriously wounded were; the Dragon Skin doesn't protect you from head to foot. Then the word came down that we'd be waiting for a few days to: 1) recruit and train additional people; 2) give local law enforcement a chance to react on their own; and 3) allow our injured to heal up a little.

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There are only 13 known pygmy owls left in Arizona, said Jenny Neeley of the Defenders of Wildlife. Neeley said the owl, which has been listed as endangered since 1997, will face imminent extinction if the protection is removed. Critical habitat designations for the owl covering more than a million acres in Arizona will be lifted if the owl comes off the list.

Never mind those million acres could grow enough food to feed millions of people; we only have 13 of those owls left. I was wondering; how far can a pigmy owl fly? That's 1,562.5mi<sup>2</sup>, giving each owl 120mi<sup>2</sup> to cover. Boy, I'll bet those owls are tired. Environmentalist is the longest 4 letter word I know.

◦

R&R stands rest and recuperation and we needed it. Not the 8 of us but the troops that were the core of our operation. The two men transported to Alpine made it, barely, but they were out of the fight permanently. It wasn't a bad trade off; we picked up 75 people who were more than willing and all but dying to get revenge. The guys passed out the weapons and gave them instruction, but only 55 of the people proved to be suitable for direct combat. The fellas found 4 others who could work as spotters. 20 of those 55 men were veterans of one conflict or another. We had a surplus of weapons, mostly G-3s and our entire cadre of troops either had G-3s or machineguns backed by M4s. Not counting us, our compliment increased to about 180.

I had to make a trip to Alpine to replace the PRBCs, FFP and solutions we'd used up in treatment. I also needed antibiotics, and had to settle for what was available. I checked on my patients and they were both awake and wanted to thank me. I felt bad that I hadn't been able to do more, any clash/crash you can walk away from could have been worse.

I spent the next 4 days giving Rachel, Marilyn and Elle a quick course in advanced first aid. It was akin to the CLS training but we didn't have the time to do any more. I taught them to establish IVs and stop bleeding. I intended to use Marilyn and Elle for the next battle and have Rachel stand by and thaw plasma as needed. (Our own Desert Doc was a Navy Hospital Corpsman with advanced training, I sure he knows what I was up against.)

It turned out that the Sheriff saw to it that the event had NO media coverage. That helped and by the time we were ready to move on, several of our targets had been eliminated. Working in concert, several Sheriff's aided by National Guard troops and some

police departments were identifying the involved communities and releasing the captives. That left us only one community that we knew of and it was bigger than we could handle by ourselves. Gunny called the Sheriff and told him where we were going and wanted to know what he could do to help us.

The Sheriff wanted to get specific, exactly what did we have in the way of weapons, people and munitions. Gunny laid it all out and later said he could hear the Sheriff had near panic in his voice. He sort of assumed we had a couple of old WW II machineguns, not 2 mortars, and 7 machineguns. He told Gunny to standby for an hour while he'd arrange what he could.

"Gunny, talk to me. This is the Sheriff. I have Deputies from 4 Departments, and one unit of National Guard. I need a sitrep."

"Our latest intelligence indicates nearly 600 well-armed adversaries, Sheriff. We have 175 people plus 4 snipers with spotters. Our wives will supply medical support, 2 in the field and two in our medical facility such that it is. We could use air evac and a doctor if you could find one. You can talk to June and determine what we have in the way of medical supplies, but she went to Alpine and replaced what we used last time. What we really need is a MASH unit, but can get by with a couple of doctors or that Paramedic you lent us last time."

"You people are better equipped than the Guard Unit I came up with, mind telling me where you got the stuff?"

"A little here, a little there, it was all acquired through military channels and paid for. None of it is stolen and the G-3s our people have were purchased or recovered from people we've fought in previous operations."

"Is there anything you need?"

"Nothing other than what I've outlined."

"No LAW rockets?"

"Sorry, no."

"What's the target?"

"Presidio."

"That's a US border crossing."

"We know, but the guys in the uniforms aren't Border Patrol."

"Chit."

"Exactly."

"How do you plan on handling it?"

"We need to divide the two areas of the town. You take the northwest section and we'll cover the southeast."

"What's the assembly area?"

"Fort Leaton State Park."

"When?"

"Midnight, tomorrow."

"What's after that?"

"As far as we know it's the last community. We'll drift into the Park a few at a time and set up camp. See you when you get there."

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Do you remember the tents from 2 years back? We'd brought them and when we arrived at the park the next day, we set one up as a medical tent. Our Tejanos supplied folding cots and the gals and I moved our equipment into the tent. We used 4 cots set on blocks as examination tables and had our supplies set up and ready to go. I wasn't looking forward to tomorrow.

"Be careful you guys we want you in our beds tonight, not on our cots today."

"We'll be fine."

They moved out around 3am, after everything was quickly coordinated. I had one retired doctor and the same Paramedic to help me in our little MASH unit. I didn't know the details of the plan and didn't care; this was the Battle of the Alamo, in reverse. For the longest time, we didn't hear a thing. When I heard the first Mk 211 round explode, I knew what that meant. We weren't that far away, we heard everything and the closest I'd come to hearing something like that was in the Army during training.

Presidio doesn't have a hospital and depended on the Big Bend Regional Hospital in Alpine for medical care. Did I mention that the population of Presidio is about 95% Hispanic? We'd treat anyone they brought in, everyone's blood is red. We couldn't really tell anyway, many of our allies were Tejanos and I hadn't met them all. We had 2 choppers available for evac, a Blackhawk and the Brewster County Sheriff's.

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Treating battle casualties starts with the triage. The tags have 4 places to identify the condition of the patient if you have triage tags. Black (Deceased) – no care needed; Red (Immediate) – life threatening injuries; Yellow (Delayed) – non-life threatening injuries; and, Green (Minor) – minor injury. The first responder can tear off the lower sections of the tag, leaving the bottom strip reflecting the patient's condition, provided they remembered to tag them in the first place.

The next stage is transportation to a frontline care facility, like what we had set up. Red were treated if the doctor was available, otherwise stabilized and transported to the hospital. Yellow tags were stabilized, as needed, and allowed to wait. Most of the complaining came from the green tagged patients. They're the ones in the waiting room in most ERs. I cannot under emphasize the importance of getting the triage part right; if a person should be Red and you tag them as Yellow, they may go from Yellow to Black. We verified each tag as the patients were brought in, SOP.

I'm sure you can speculate about what happened; we began to run low on supplies. I was full up, 72 units of FFP, 24 units of PRBCs plus normal saline, D5W, D5NS and Ringer's, two cases each of the 500ml bags (24 units, per case). When they brought Dan in, he was wearing a Yellow tag, I'm surprised he even let them bring him in and I let the Paramedic treat him, I couldn't although I sure wanted to. Before that day was over, all 4 of them came in; none with anything worse than a Yellow tag, but still... I later learned the order of battle.

Phase one was to secure the border crossing and that went off without a hitch. They set the Ma Deuce and both mortars up there to prevent the many thousands of Méxicans from crossing the border from Ojinaga, Chihuahua, México. In phase two, the attacks on the northwest and southeast sections of Presidio were launched simultaneously following the previous plan of infiltrating first. Phase three was a full on MOUT (Military Operation in Urban Terrain). That lasted nearly 24 hours, not the quick and decisive campaign of the last time.

"How are you doing?"

"34 stitches, knife cut."

"If you get close enough to use knives, you're too close."

"Mine was bigger than his and sharper. How'd things go?"

"Still going, Dan. All four of you made it to our tent, but nobody's dead and none of you needed to be transported. What was the mortar fire?"

"They must have tried to bring in reinforcements from México. We set up the Ma Deuce and both mortars to cover the crossing. How bad are the others?"

"Yellow tags, delayed treatment, bullet creases, knife cuts, shrapnel. They must have had RPGs."

"RPG-18s was all I saw, the Russian equivalent to our M72."

"Did we have any?"

"The Guard brought in several cases of M72A7s."

"I thought you guys were only going to snipe."

"They had us outnumbered and had the defensive position, we didn't have a lot of choice. You shouldn't see many patients from the other side; I heard our Tejanos say the order was ningún cuarto, no quarter. I'm out of the fight; I'm too old for hand-to-hand combat."

"You'll take about 2 weeks to heal up."

"Hey you old fart, forget to duck?"

"What happened to you, Gunny."

"I got clipped in the buttocks."

"A Marine getting shot in the butt? I don't believe it."

"Snuck up behind me."

"Likely story. Forrest."

"What happened to you?"

"Ran out of ammo in my M1A just as one of those illegals charged. I introduced him to Sylvester Stallone."

## The Odyssey – Chapter 13

"You should know better to get in a knife fight with a Mexican; some of them are pretty good with blades."

"I know, I have 34 stitches. I don't believe he realized that I'd sharpened the top edge. June said that Tom and Hank were hurt, too."

"They'll live, but we're getting too old for this stuff."

"I hear they're still mopping up."

"Haven't heard a gunshot in quite a while, I think maybe it's over."

"Can we go home now? We need to heal up."

"I think so, but you'd better check with Juan and Manny."

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"June do you know where I can find Juan and Manny?"

"Juan is in the hospital in Alpine, Red tagged. Juan was around a while ago, what do you need him for?"

"I told Gunny I thought we'd go home, but he suggested I check with Juan and Manny first."

"Juan won't be doing any fighting for several weeks. I thought this was the last mission."

"So did I, but I need to confirm that. How long is it going to take the 4 us before we're ready to go?"

"You'll have your stitches out in a few days, but the wound will need to be favored for at least 30 days. Gunny and Tom the same, Hank maybe 5 weeks. Darn it, do you have any idea how I felt when they started dragging you in one by one? Rachel lost it completely and Marilyn was the one who had to treat Gunny and Tom. She worked until it all died down and then got drunk."

"Did anyone get a count on our dead and wounded?"

"Ask the Sheriff, we were too busy to count. Dan, we ran out of supplies and had to air-lift in more plasma and IV solutions. Our antibiotics are gone although Big Bend Regional is trying to find us replacements sometime in the next 3-4 weeks. It will take that long to refresh our PRBCs and plasma."

"Honey I'm ready to leave, but we can't leave them in a lurch. We're in good condition as far as our supplies go, except for the meds and you said you have them by the time we're healed up. We'll just do a little fishing and riding and leave as soon as we can."

"We'll see. Can you tell me something, where are the feds? Protection of our borders is a federal matter, not the job of Kansas farmers."

I couldn't tell June that you could take the man out of the Army, but not the soldier out of the man. It would make her mad and she already knew it. Marines say, once a Marine, always a Marine, so I was sure Gunny and Hank would agree with me. Come to think of it, I think we 4 old soldiers needed a few drinks too; we were just waiting until we were off the meds.

"June when you go to Alpine, I'd like to ride along and check on Juan. Are we free to return to the trailers?"

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Juan had taken a bullet in his right leg, severing the femoral artery and shattering his femur. The doctor at the hospital said it would take weeks to heal and he'd need physical therapy. According to Manny, out of our 36 men, we had 2 dead, Juan seriously wounded and several more that would be back in fighting trim is about 3-4 weeks. I asked him about going home.

"Dan, why don't the 4 of you kick back and relax for a couple of weeks? We can gather information and if we aren't need, get back to the farm."

That night we were treated to steaks, baked potatoes and fresh salads. I shared my discussion with Manny and we agreed to take his advice. Terlingua Ranch's campground had openings and we took them. This trip we intended to see the Country because last time we were too busy dodging our Tejanos and getting ready to fight a war with México. Did you like how that turned out? We did, if there hadn't been those people trying to get into the Park, the only shots fired would have been on the practice range.

A friend had talked about how nice the Park was and thankfully Gunny's wound was high and it didn't affect his ability to sit a saddle. Off we went to see the sights for the first time, really. Rather than have a Ranger try and seize our guns, we only carried concealed. It was just a short ride from the ranch to the Park and the Country was both rugged and beautiful. My sense of dread began to wane and I was enjoying myself. We cooked steaks every night to improve our men's supply of red corpuscles and help them heal. When they couldn't ride anymore, they went fishing and the other girls and I saddled up and returned to the Park.

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"Hola, we have news. We have one more town to help out on our way back to Kansas."

"How's Juan?"

"He says he'll set off every metal detector in Texas, they mostly bolted his leg back together. It's going to be awhile before he's back on his feet."

"Where is the place that needs help?"

"Up in the panhandle, almost to Oklahoma close to US 83."

"We came down 83, Manny, I didn't see any sign of trouble," Gunny said.

"Nevertheless. It's close to the Oklahoma border and that means they aren't really all that far from Garden City and Lakin."

"What's the name of the place?"

"Farnsworth, it's on State Highway 15 ten miles southwest of Perryton in west central Ochiltree County. We didn't go through there."

"Wheat Country isn't it?"

"Yes and Farnsworth is small only about 150 people."

"I remember Perryton; it's a fairly big town. That's only about 125 miles from Lakin. Are these illegals that close to home?"

"They're everywhere, Gunny. We have some living in Garden City."

"How can that be?"

"This isn't 2005 where employers could check on people's papers. There are lots of forged documents floating around and the government has lost most of its records. What did you expect with a war and then Yellowstone?"

"I didn't really expect either a war or Yellowstone erupting, wasn't that flu pandemic bad enough?"

"It was, but in case you haven't noticed it, we've slid back in time almost a full century, Gunny. For the most part the Country stopped farming with horses by the '40s. The only time we use the tractors is to turn over difficult soil. When we can get by with the Clydesdales, we do. I honestly thought I'd never leave Texas to work on a farm in Kansas."

"Ok Manny, tell me more about Farnsworth."

"There's not much to tell, it's a small town mostly built around an elevator on the Santa Fe railroad line. Compared to Presidio, this will be a snap."

It was my turn. "I don't understand how a group of Texas ranchers could allow themselves to be overrun by a group of illegals, Manny."

"Doesn't matter how it happened, Dan. It probably surprised them as much as it does you. One thing people have a problem with is the term Hispanic. It started with the 2000 Census. People of Hispanic origin may be of any race and should answer the question on race by marking one or more race categories shown on the questionnaire, including White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and Some Other Race.

"Hispanics are asked to indicate their origin in the question on Hispanic origin, not in the question on race, because in the federal statistical system ethnic origin is considered to be a separate concept from race. Most Tejano are Mexican Indians in terms of ethnicity and originally spoke Spanish as a first language and learned English as a second language. Over the years, that changed to the point where some people with Hispanic surnames don't even speak Spanish. The population of Ochiltree County was about 1/3 Hispanic before all of the recent illegal immigration. It would be difficult to say what it is now."

"That still doesn't explain..."

"They probably had more guns, Dan," Gunny chuckled. "Ok, we'll clear this up on the way home, when do you want to leave?"

"We need a couple of more weeks to heal up Gunny."

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It was just before Thanksgiving when we were ready to go home. I called John and asked them to arm themselves and meet us in Perryton. He wanted to know how it went and I explained about how everyone had managed to get shot or otherwise injured, like Dan. He told me Jim had called home and was doing well in school. He'd rented an apartment and took Julia and the kids with him. They had the ethanol produced for both the bourbon and E85 and were processing the soybean oil into biodiesel, most of which they'd been selling. We agreed to meet in Perryton on Black Friday, November 25, 2022. I suggested they just bring the submachine guns, the MP5K-PDWs; we weren't up against that many people and had enough heavy weapons.

The remaining antibiotics finally came in about the time everyone was healed up enough to head home. We got ourselves around, settled our bill with the ranch and headed to Alpine to pick up Juan. We self-insured, if you know what that means, there wasn't such a thing as a healthcare policy anymore.

"You look fit, but a wheelchair?"

"It's going to take that femur more than a month to heal up. They told me I could get physical therapy in Garden City at the hospital there. They said once the cast is off it will take 4-6 weeks for my femur to regain its strength. I should be ready to work by spring."

"You get to sit this one out. Did Manny fill you in?"

"Someplace named Farnsworth, near Perryton? I don't know the place, but Texas is a pretty big state. Salina said I was done going to war. You should have heard the butt chewing she gave me when I came to in the hospital."

"Juan, I don't speak Spanish so I doubt I'd have understood most of what she said."

"It was in English and you'd have understood every word. I understand Dan got cut up a little."

"He ran out of ammo and decided to play Rambo."

"Doesn't he know better than to get in a knife fight with a Mexican?"

"Ask him to show you the scar, it's still quite pink."

"And Gunny got shot in the butt?"

"Call him Forrest, most of the fellas do. He claims he hasn't seen the million dollars either."

"Oh, from the movie?"

"Yes."

"How many of our people got hurt?"

"Too many, Juan. We're battered but all of our people survived."

"This place, Farnsworth, it's close to Garden City?"

"Yes, about 135 miles, give or take."

"So, Mrs. Robbins, who is winning?"

"I don't know," I told him. I meant it too. It seemed to me there was always *just one more fight to fight*. It really wasn't that far from Farnsworth to Lakin. If they had an illegal problem that close to home, I wondered how much longer it would be until we had a problem

in Kansas. Rachel was ok at the moment and there hadn't been any reemergence of her chronic lymphocytic leukemia and the doctor said she was still in stage 0. I think I was developing an ulcer and began to take Prevacid and or Nexium, whichever was handy, and took Pepcid AC when that didn't do the trick.

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You know where we spent Thanksgiving, right? That's right on the road. If we were going to hook up with the boys in Perryton on Black Friday, we didn't have much choice. A headline in the UK Guardian once said, *Hope for the best, expect the worst*. Our motto was, *Prepare for the worst and hope for the best*. If you do that, it doesn't much matter what happens, you'll probably get through it.

Way back in the beginning, that was the philosophy my first husband, Randy, had. We did it and it took every dime we had. It turned out to be a good thing, however, when we got the bird flu, the pneumonic plague and the war came. He didn't live to see Yellowstone erupt and by that time we had too many people to shelter in the underground shelter. What is the sense of expecting the worst if you don't prepare for it? Kansas is about mid-Country so we didn't get the terribly heavy snowfall that Nebraska and the Dakotas did. We were nearly back to normal but the growing seasons in North Dakota were still pretty short.

It was becoming a real challenge to farm and provide for our own security and farm at the same time. It wasn't technically our job, the Preamble said, *We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, **provide for the common defense**, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.*

Sometime after that, they began taking away our guns. A gun is a tool, the same as a hoe or a rake, it's just used for a different purpose, as in primarily for killing living animals be they human or other. That's the way it always has been, learn to live with it. Very few guns pull their own triggers, the bad guy is the human holding the gun and using it to do something he or she shouldn't. England tried to keep their law enforcement officers, the Bobbies, disarmed for a very long time. And, for a very long time it worked. Not any more, by 2000, "Armed police on the beat have been introduced to the British mainland for the first time. The decision by Nottinghamshire police to arm officers patrolling two inner-city housing estates breaks one of the longest standing traditions of unarmed Bobbies on the beat. Britain is one of the few countries in Europe where police officers do not carry guns as a matter of course."

What has happened since the time when the British boasted that their "bobbies" (police) didn't carry guns and when that boast was used by US gun control advocates to illustrate how backward the US was in allowing citizens to own and carry guns?

What has happened to the British boast of being an all-inclusive nation, which had liber-

al immigration laws and even more lax enforcement?

Why, since the subway bombings, are heavily-armed bobbies now being seen on television and in print? Did their sudden introduction to armaments result in their getting so trigger-happy that they gunned down an innocent man whom they suspected of being a subway bomber?

What has caused the change from the "all are welcome" policy to consideration of kicking out those who even hint of sympathy for non-British-looking people and the indefinite detention of suspected bombers or bombing conspirators?

Dumb questions, the world is changing and you folks on the other side of the pond best change with it.

o

"Have any trouble getting here?"

"Sure Dad, we had to fight off hundreds of Mutant Zombie Bikers," Dan Jr. laughed.

"Did you have enough ammo?" Tom asked.

"Nope, we were killed, I'm a ghost. Actually it was no trouble with about a 2½ hour drive. So what's this John is saying about illegal immigrants in some little town?"

"County law enforcement is provided by the Ochiltree County Sheriff's Department, which consists of the Sheriff, six deputies and a narcotics taskforce officer. The Department oversees enforcement of criminal laws, serves civil process and operates the 32-bed county jail. Its communications center dispatches officers from the Texas Department of Public Safety as well as Texas Parks. The Perryton Police Department has ten uniformed officers to enforce state and local laws around the clock throughout the city," Manny explained. "They're pretty shorthanded to deal with much trouble. We're up against about 40 people so we have them outnumbered. From what I'm told, they keep a very low profile so we're going to have to dig them out."

"How do you want to handle it?"

"I thought maybe the four families could backtrack to 70 and take a cross-Country road to 15 south of Farnsworth and come into Farnsworth from the south. They could stop for fuel or something and be our distraction. We'll come down from Perryton a few at a time and spread out through the town and find the illegals. Did you fellas bring your badges?"

"Never leave home without them."

"Pin them on, that with confuse them. You aren't in uniform and they'll assume you're INS, especially since you have body armor and are carrying MP5s."

"Won't that be like advertising?" John asked. "It will give them a nice spot to aim at."

"That's level V stuff you're wearing isn't it? At best they'll have G-3s."

"Let's get this over with people; we're only 3 hours from home!" Gunny exclaimed. "Patton said, *A good solution applied with vigor now is better than a perfect solution applied ten minutes later.*"

o

Texas law provides, in relevant part, "It is unlawful to display a firearm in a public place in a manner calculated to alarm." It was also unlawful for CCW permit holders to openly display firearms. Needless to say when the 8 of us showed up armed to the teeth with our Colt revolvers, there was some concern voiced.

"Kansas, huh? Y'all oughta pay more attention to Texas laws."

"What laws?"

"Y'all will be making folks a bit nervous with those Colts y'all be wearing."

"You have diesel?"

"Nope, fresh out."

"Where can we get a bite to eat?"

"Café. Best leave the guns in your pickups."

"I don't think so," Gunny replied. We headed to the café, it wasn't hard to spot. If the station attendant had been paying attention, he'd have noticed that our latigos were loose. If the mere presence of the 'Colts' alarmed him, that would have made him pee his pants.

We took two tables and the waitress slapped down menus.

"Coffee?"

"Got a beer?"

"Nope. Coffee?"

"All around please."

If Manny expected us to draw attention, he wish was fulfilled. Everyone in that restau-

rant had their eyes glued on our guns. The counterman looked like he was going to rub a hole clean through the counter in the one spot he kept cleaning. People came in, but nobody left, it reminded me of Hotel California, *You can check out anytime you like, but you can never leave.*

I suppose you want to know what happened next. A sheriff's car from Ochiltree County Sheriff's Department pulled into town and who should get out but Dan and Jeremy, looking a whole lot like feds. Slick trick, I wondered how they'd pull that off. Before they were even out of the patrol car, a black bread company type van pulled in looking just like a SWAT vehicle. About 10 *agents* poured out of the back, most wearing Kearny County Deputy badges. Jeremy yelled out *INS* and it appeared that at least some people in Farnsworth believed him.

Our guys looked impressive dressed as they were and carrying those MP5K-PDWs, if I hadn't known better, I've have been impressed too. I'm sure the fellas holding the town hostage must have thought someone had tipped the Sheriff off and he'd brought in the feds, which wasn't all that far from the impression Manny wanted to create. We finished our sandwiches, left money on the table and walked outside to watch. There were 3 roads out of Farnsworth, route 15 northeast and southwest and county roads to the north, south, east and west. Manny had all of those covered by men with our machine guns.

The rats were caught in a trap with no way out. I assume they realized this and the sight of 10 feds in body armor suggested that if they resisted, they'd end up dead. Most of them came out on the road and threw down their weapons. Gunny and Manny began to question them; we didn't need our cover any longer. I didn't see it but Gunny must have very persuasive or perhaps it was Manny. While we Kansas vacationers guarded the prisoners, the *feds* rounded up the remaining men using the info provided by the prisoners they questioned. Bu this time the entire Sheriff's Department and some of the Perryton cops were cuffing the prisoners and herding them into the patrol cars and the SWAT van.

The owner of the café came out and refunded our money, saying lunch was on the house. He was just sorry, he said, that he didn't have the beer we wanted. It must have taken 40 minutes from the time we hit town and no shots were fired. We treated the café owner to a real beer. After that, we wrapped it up and headed for Lakin.

o

Our 1st and 3rd outings had lasted about 7 months and had involved our Tejanos and us. In the process we'd made quite an impression and more than a few friends. It had been very rewarding but hadn't made much of a dent in the problem; but then, neither had the Border Patrol. We were a private group and we had an advantage, no embedded reporters. Thanksgiving was rescheduled for the following week and everyone on the farms came. I suppose the crowd numbered close to 150 people; we had to rent a facility to hold us all.

We were proud of our achievements, the downside being the deaths of some of our people and the injuries suffered by others. Every morning a person gets out of bed, life begins all over and although you never know what life's going to bring you that day, we never felt more ready for whatever was coming next.

When called upon to identify us the local law enforcement authorities were consistent in saying no comment. That had had been our only request, don't tell anyone who we are so they couldn't track us down and target us. The generosity of the American people had long been recognized, we weren't in it for the glory; we were just helping some friends.

o

"Hey Sheriff, what's up?"

"Could the 8 of you be in town for the next Town Council meeting?"

"If it's important, I suppose. Is it something special?"

"You could say so; say could I get a case of bourbon?"

"We might have one left, sure."

Dan set the case on the kitchen table and the Sheriff responded by laying down 12 \$20 gold certificates.

"Hey, it's a gift, keep your money."

"No sir. I pay the same as you charge everyone else, \$240 a case, right?"

"I hear that the going price, yes."

"Ah cut the bull, even the ATF is convinced you're making the stuff, and I know you are. I pay the going price and would like to think there's more when it runs out."

"Have you tried our beer?"

"The stuff Ray makes? I've had a taste or two, what's he charge for a keg?"

"I have no idea; we never had to pay him for it."

"Got any? I'll ask him and settle up later with you."



## The Odyssey – Chapter 14

"It's on the house, we didn't pay for it. After that, you can get it from Ray directly. Now what's this about the next Council meeting?"

"It should have been at the next County Commissioner's meeting, but they agreed to do whatever it is this way. As to what it is, let's just say it's a surprise and leave it at that."

◦

We weren't sure what to wear so we dressed up a bit and attended the next City Council meeting.

"Our last order of business is to recognize the contributions made by 4 families to Kearny County and the City of Lakin. Could the 8 of you please come to the podium?"

"In the years since the Pandemic and the war, these 4 families had contributed to the recovery of our City and County. Not only have they provided food and garden spaces, they have steadfastly aided the Sheriff's Department in helping maintain law and order in our community. In recognition of those accomplishments, Kearny County and the City of Lakin will reissue their reserve Deputy Sheriff's credentials and issue them the appropriate firearms, courtesy of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

"If I may, I like to summarize some of the events they assisted others in outside of our home area. On two separate occasions, Hank and Rachel, Gunny and Marilyn, Dan and June and Tom and Elle have assisted local law enforcement agencies in Texas, helping prevent an invasion by México and subsequently freeing several communities taken hostage by illegal immigrants."

◦

After being sworn, we were presented with Certificates of Appreciation, our same old badges and cases contain the MP5s and the H&K handguns. We expected the identification cards to be stamped 'Retired' but they weren't. There had to be a hook, there always is; however, whatever it was, it wasn't apparent.

The Sheriff explained that he'd gotten a call from the Sheriff of Ochiltree County to thank the Sheriff for sending the 2 Deputies and Reserve Deputies to deal with a problem that had slipped his notice. He was especially impressed to with the body armor and MP5K-PDWs. Something should be done to recognize the accomplishment. Our Sheriff got all of the details because he hadn't heard anything about the event. Pride eventually replaced his initial anger and he had those MP5K-PDWs collected from FEMA collecting dust. He was impressed that not a shot had been fired. He had gotten together with the County Commissioners and this was what they had worked out. And, by the way, since our Tejanos were now residents of Kansas, have them stop by the office and pick up Reserve Deputy badges and their *special equipment*. He left a stack of applications and

told June to fire up her computer to cover his butt with the appropriate paperwork. (The Laserjet had a spot on the drum that left the same mark on all the school certificates that wasn't on the real certificates from the long destroyed school in eastern Kansas. You can run, but you can't hide from the long arm of the law.)

The Sheriff had more to say. That military hardware we'd picked up had better keep a low profile and only appear if National Guard troops were around, unless we had proof of ownership which technically would put us in violation of Kansas law. About the only thing he didn't know about our equipment was the serial numbers (thank God).

o

When Jim completed Paramedic training in the spring of 2023, they came home and he went to work in Garden City. When he had time, I began to complete his training by teaching him use of our old equipment. From then on I'd cover the farms when he was working and he'd cover them the rest of the time. You knew that Doc owned the equipment but did you know that when he died his wife gave it to us? I probably didn't mention it when I told you he died. The military had tons of 9mm ammo. It only took Tom one phone call and a little gold coin, and so did we. We'd had a few of the MP5K-PDWs, and now we had enough to allow us all to play fed. Apparent Dan and Jeremy and our other Reserve Deputies had checked them out for target practice before they went down to Texas. The reserve Deputies included Jeb, Abel and John.

If you ask me, what the hook was, I'd have to tell you that the Sheriff expected the illegals to eventually show up in Kearny County because they'd only been 135 miles away from Lakin. Santa Anna made the rules at the Battle of the Alamo, we just followed them. You knew that Marty Robbins didn't take sides concerning the battle. Here's proof:

*The story began in Renosa  
A village in old México  
A girl and a Mexican soldier  
Were sweethearts, a long time ago  
They made big plans for a wedding  
The town of Renosa would go  
And there would see Jimmy Martinez  
Married to Sarah Sero  
Oh-oh-oh*

*One day there came a message  
It said that Jimmy must go  
As Jimmy was leavin' Renosa  
To fight at the Alamo  
He never returned to Renosa  
The story's been told and retold  
How Jimmy the Mexican soldier*

*Died at the Alamo  
Oh-oh-oh*

*Jimmy's last letter to Sarah  
Began with a message like this  
Oh dear one, how sweet is the memory  
The memory of our parting kiss  
I send my heart in this letter  
I pray to the one up above  
Oh Sarah, don't ever forget me  
Stay just as pure as the dove  
Oh-oh-oh*

*I'm like the dove in your window  
It's chosen just one mate for life  
And you are the one I have chosen  
The one that I want for my wife  
He never returned to Renosa  
The story's been told and retold  
How Jimmy the Méxican soldier  
Died at the Alamo  
Oh-oh-oh*

*Sarah refused to believe them  
She prayed for Jimmy's return  
And there ever night in her window  
A small little candle would burn  
Years turned her dark hair to silver  
She prayed for Jimmy so long  
Then one night the village was saddened  
The light in her window was gone  
Oh-oh-oh*

o

I expected any moment for Rodney King to jump out from behind a bush and say, "Can we all just get along?"

It wasn't going to happen, not with Russia and China supplying México and Venezuela still angry with us and would be until Chávez unelected himself. If you read any newspaper from 2006, most of what we've experienced could easily have been predicted. Then, we could look back and pick whichever prediction came true, just like people do with Nostradamus.

The cryptic message said: "AIF still trying. Have now survived 5 strikes without a scratch. Last one was on Mom's day, so this year Mom and Mary get me alive and in-

tact for Mom's Day." The only clue I had was that AIF stood for Anti-Iraqi Forces (Insurgents). George's popularity was down to 31% and falling, which was 31% higher than it was in some homes in California.

o

The Air Force had limited its attacks to an area just south of the border. They hadn't nuked México City, only the Mexican Army and no targets in the US. The military was all deployed in the Southwest and from El Paso to Los Angeles they were forcing the Mexicans back across the border. Anyone of Mexican heritage was carefully screened in a detention camp and once citizenship was established, they were released with an apology. This occurred quickly, not like in *The Siege*. It appeared that they were doing it right, for a change. There was, nonetheless, a backlash; some of the supporters of La Raza and NOA were American citizens.

Temporary Visas and Work Permits were cancelled and the holders transported to the border and forced to return home. The fence paid for by taxpayers didn't extend the full length of the border; hence people like us were covering the open areas. The Minuteman Organization incensed over the death of Jim Gilchrist weren't taking prisoners. This had been the reason for our second trip to Texas; the illegal aliens were seizing towns. That's why earlier I raised the question, how could it happen in Texas? With few exceptions the southern tier of states had very liberal gun laws.

During our free time during the summer of '23, we made plans concerning defense of our farms. In the summer with the extra gardeners, we didn't believe that would be difficult, whereas during the winter with just the folks on the farms it was a different situation. Not one we hadn't dealt with in the past, but we weren't going the merc route again. Why should we, with our hired hands and our Tejanos, our force was nearly the size of our previous security force. By now everyone on the farms was battle seasoned with the exception of some of the wives. With weapons running out our ears, we could easily remedy that.

The only item we were missing was lighter body armor. Tom determined the sizes and quantities we needed and reached for the phone. By the time the harvest was in, we were ready for anything but an attack with tanks or nuclear weapons. The girls and I had organized the wives into a force we call *The Amazons*, allowing us to overcome one problem that couldn't be addressed in any other way, the machismo of the Latin male.

Rachel was out of the loop because, she was too unpredictable and she was put in charge of protecting the children. She and the children would use our underground shelter, getting the kids and grandkids out of the way. We Amazons would serve as the reserves, it was the only way. Once we had our ladies qualified, we went to see the Sheriff. The only difference between a Latin male and a non-Latin male is the label the used, with Latin's, it's machismo, with non-Latin's it's chauvinism. When we showed the Sheriff what we were capable of he accepted the applications.

o

Yields were up again this year. I think that related directly to the fact that Yellowstone had put out as much ash as it could have. June, Marilyn and Elle got together and formed a group they called the Amazons. Although the Amazons were largely myth, there was ample evidence of female soldiers throughout history. They even went to the Sheriff and persuaded him to make them reserve Deputies, if you can believe that! Lord knows they had plenty of weapons to choose from, the MP5K-PDWs and the M16s. They became proficient in both and then started in using bows and arrows. Juan, who was about 95% recovered and used a cane, told me this went against tradition but with their wives now wearing the M9s, he and most of his compañeros were reluctant to say much to the women.

I told him to get used to it, women had been wearing the pants in Anglo families for years. He shrugged his shoulders and changed the subject. He said he'd heard rumors that La Raza was trying to organize some of the Latinos in Garden City. I explained that some of us thought that was why the Sheriff had created such a large body of Reserves. In times gone by, the Sheriff's office typically had maybe 30 Reserve Deputies and only used them for special events, usually directing traffic.

Our fighting force was large, consisting of the 36 Tejanos and 36 Tejano Amazons. There were the 8 of us, make that 7, Rachel was going to watch the kids. June and I had 4 children plus spouses, 8 more. We also had 6 more in Jeb, Abel and John. There was Jason and Karen, plus 2 hired hands and their wives on each farm. There was also Don and Sandy, Ray and Sue 112 less June, nearly 2 Platoons.

Our 3 sections of land made good money. The soybeans were converted to biodiesel and meal, some of the corn became alcohol for E85 and bourbon and we had a total of 90 acres of gardens and canned a fair amount of produce. We were all but energy independent, purchasing only propane, a little gas to blend E85 and coal when we could get it. With our wells we could irrigate in dry years and don't forget the livestock. We were selling about 300 head of cattle and about 1,200 hogs. Horse sales were improving now that peoples' tractors began to wear out. About the only thing we didn't have was June's fire engine, Yellowstone erupted before she got the purchase made.

"What are you doing, Dan?"

"Just thinking about our situation. We're pretty well off except you never bought the fire engine."

"I forgot all about that do you think we need one?"

"Couldn't hurt, if we do get attacked they might start fires. Do you still know where you can get one?"

"After all that's happened, I'd imagine they would be hard to come by, honey. I might have to settle for an old model, like a museum piece. I'll look around."

June found a used pumper from the same place she found the engine 5 years before. Their inventory was very low and the prices had gone up considerably. Here's what she bought:

1972 FORD L-900 PUMPER  
Completely refurbished in 1988  
3208 Cat diesel engine  
10 speed Road Ranger transmission  
Air brakes  
Repainted  
All new diamond plate  
1000 GPM Pump  
1000 Gallon tank  
Around the pump KK foam proportioner  
Front bumper jump line with 1 1/8" nozzle  
Tank water 5 light level indicator  
Pump was overhauled (will actually test to a 1250)  
Miles: 57,655  
Hours:1920  
New emergency lights and compartment lights  
All inside compartments stripped and repainted  
High-side compartments on driver side  
12 volt scene lights  
Emergency lights and siren  
2 x 10 foot, 5" hard suction hoses and barrel strainer  
24' Ext. Ladder  
14' Roof Ladder  
10' Folding attic ladders with head protector  
2 x Wheel chocks  
8 x SCBA brackets  
2 x Light box lights with chargers  
6' Pike pole  
Dry Chemical and CO<sub>2</sub> extinguishers  
\$35,000 plus shipping

"What did you get for hoses?"

"The hoses are new, 1½" and 2½" for discharge plus 6" for intake."

"Rubberized?"

"All I could get was canvas. We'll run the truck through the diesel repair place in Garden City and get the fuel tanks cleaned so we can use biodiesel. If the engine or transmis-

sion needs work, we'd better do that now before the parts become unavailable."

"What are we going to do for firemen?"

"Run some of our people through the training classes they hold for the volunteer fireman."

"When do you intend to build the fence?"

"What fence?"

"The 3-layer border fence around the 3 farms."

"I don't think so, Dan, *Fixed fortifications are monuments to man's stupidity*, remember? And besides, how could we defend 8 miles of fence? We'd need a truckload of heavy machineguns and something heavier, like those Mk 19s."

"I think we need something, even if it were nothing more than concrete road barriers."

"I've all kinds of different concrete barriers, sectioned and continuous. There must be 3 or 4 shapes."

"The 42" F-shaped barrier (tall) is what some say is the best."

"We would have to get permission from the County to close the cross roads and we'd have to come up with some kind of heavy duty gates if we did put in a concrete barrier. It would probably run us at least a million dollars, Dan."

"It might even cost more honey, I have no idea of the cost. It would be a depreciable farm improvement. I suppose we could pull the metal posts and insert them in the top of the barrier and re-string the barbed wire. That would increase the barrier height to about 84"."

o

"You want to build what?"

"A 42" high concrete barrier all the way around the 3 farms, Gunny."

"Jesus H. Christ, are you nuts?"

"Probably. Say, can we store our fire engine in your machine shed?"

"What fire engine? I thought that idea went belly up when Yellowstone erupted."

"It was resurrected."

"What do you do, sit in you den at night and scheme up these crazy plans?"

"Right, I do it on the computer. Actually when you think about it, the Sheriff must think something very bad is going to happen."

"Why do you think that?"

"We have 112 adults on these three farms and 2 are Deputy Sheriff's and 110 of us are Reserves. The Sheriff never had more than 30 reserves at any one time until recently. A lot of the folks in the area know how productive our 3 farms are and how we've built large herds of livestock. In a way, our farms are almost completely independent of the community as a whole. If we bought and stored a large quantity of stabilized gasoline and propane, we'd have 98% of the things we'd need to survive for the long-term."

"Only 98%?"

"We can't make our own toilet paper or grow coffee. We could stock up on those two items and buy a few tons of rice and we'd be set."

"The next thing I know, you're going to suggest we buy armor."

"No, but now that you mention it..."

"Forget it, Dan."

"So how much is this little plan of yours going to cost us?"

"I have no idea. What's the difference, we can't spend the money as fast as we make it."

"Sez, you. I don't produce bourbon."

"No, but how much are you earning each year on stud services?"

"Not as much as you make on the booze."

"You can't go to jail for selling stud services, Gunny."

"True."

"Look, maybe we should merge the 3 corporations in to one corporation and divide everything equally."

"What would you call the place?"

"How about the MPR Ranch?"



"Mike, Paul and Randy?"

"Exactly."

"The 6 of us ought to get together and discuss this, it's a big step."

"I'll ask June to work it out with Marilyn and Rachel."

o

When Dan came to me with the idea about merging the three farms and three corporations into one, I smelled his breath to make sure he hadn't been drinking. Then I gave it some thought and talked to Jim and Mary about it. I expected some resistance on their part, but Jim had spent a year in Topeka and he was surprisingly unopposed. I explained that it would only have a marginal effect on our income because the other 2 farms also had outside sources of income. Trying to think ahead, I suggested that we give Jason a 10% share and he could manage all 3 farms. When they agreed, I called Marilyn and Rachel filled them in on the suggestion. They said they'd talk to their kids and if everyone agreed they'd let me know and we could have the meeting.

I had considered the MPR name and there were 6 combinations, MPR, MRP, PMR, PRM, RMP and RPM. Geographically, from the north to the south, MPR made the most sense, as did RPM. However, RPM sounded like a gas additive. Perhaps if we merged, we could consolidate our operations, after all we didn't really need 3 separate cheese operations.

I should also point out that we kept an eye on the bulletin boards in town and whenever we saw something we could use, like another freezer, etc. we bought it if it worked ok. Dan also shared the comment about the rice and toilet paper. I placed a special order for a truckload of the latter and called Arkansas and bought 10 tons of rice in 100 pound bags. Something like pinto beans will keep forever, but you have to soak them longer because they dry out unless you seal them in plastic bags, which we didn't. We didn't have a lot of the rolls of seal-a-meal bags left and I hadn't seen them in the store for a long time. In fact I was surprised we could get toilet paper, but that was one of the first manufacturing plants reopened. Bidets aren't really popular in the US.

o

"Can this be done?"

"The lawyer says it can and all of the kids agree."

"What's the next step?"

"Give the lawyer the go ahead and figure out how we're going to consolidate opera-

tions."

"Ray makes the beer and you make the bourbon, what did you have in mind for us?" Marilyn asked.

"How about our moving the cheese operations to your farm?"

Gunny?"

"Suits me, but we'll still age it in the existing facilities, right?"

"No reason to change that."

"What about this damned fence you want to build?"

"Gunny, I talked to a County Commissioner and he said it would give them 2 less miles of road to maintain. He seemed to think they'd approve it if it were brought to a vote."

"If you go ahead with it, where are you going to get the extra steel posts?"

"We have a ton of them from when we combined the quarter section and half section. I think there's probably enough to do that and Randy rolled up the barbed and woven wire and stored it too. The contractor said we'd save mucho dinero if we pulled the fences ourselves."

"When do you intend to start this?"

"As soon as we all agree."

"What's this other business about Jason?"

"Jason gets 5% of our net for managing our farm. June proposes to give him a 10% interest in the new corporation and let him manage the combined farm."

"In lieu of salary?"

"Yes."

"All in favor?"

## The Odyssey – Chapter 15

There were none opposed. In the process, we'd gained about 10 acres of land, or would, by converting the 2 roads back to farm use. And, by eliminating one the 2 fences at the end of 2 sections, we'd gain plenty of extra steel posts and fence wire. MPR Ranch would be its own little kingdom away from the daily strife besetting the Country. We decided that we'd have Tom contact everyone he knew in any branch of service and see what he could do about getting some pedestal mounts and more of the machineguns. Rather than try to acquire Mk 19s, we'd buy LAW rockets, if we could get them. The guns were expensive and the ammo prohibitively so. Only developmental models were available, anyway... the project was dropped in 2007.

To handle the project, we'd get a construction loan from the bank and then pay it off once the barrier wall was completed. We figured to follow along behind the contractor by about a month and put up one roll of pig wire and 3 stands of barbed wire. There really isn't anything such as an impenetrable barrier, but a 7' high concrete and wire barrier sure would slow anyone down who decided they wanted on the farm. We wanted it done before spring planting time came.

o

You can pull out fence a whole lot faster than you can put it in and we started our people on the project immediately. They were pulling the steel fence posts and the wood posts and coiling the wire. We figured to cut up the wood posts for our furnaces; the creosote was well leached out. Generally concrete isn't something you pour during the winter, but the weather was actually agreeable and they were making good progress. So much so that they nearly caught up to our guys and they had to hurry. After the barriers were in, we had gates to build and get mounted. We had them fabricated out of 6" pipe and they only opened outward. While they wouldn't stop a tank or a bulldozer, they would stop a semi-tractor.

Being married into this family had introduced me to what seemed to be an endless cycle. We'd prepare for the worst and hope for the best, but believe me when I tell you best must have taken a wrong turn in Albuquerque and got lost. Gunny seemed to think we were over prepared, Marilyn didn't. Tom said he'd try to get more of the medium and heavy machine guns, but he wasn't too sure he could pull it off; most of the fellas he knew in the Army had retired. Pedestals could be manufactured right here in town, we had one that the machine shop could use for a pattern.

The military had intended to replace the Mark 19s with the M307 and while there weren't any of the 307s available, nor could we afford the ammo, the Mark 19s were a different story. They cost us about 10 ounces of gold each and only one type of ammo was available, the M430 cartridges. The HEDP (high-explosive, dual-purpose) M430 cartridge, joined with M16A2 links, is the standard round for the MK 19. The impact-type round penetrates 2 inches of steel armor at 0-degree obliquity and inflicts personnel casualties in the target area. This round is packed in an M548 ammunition container (48

rounds, linked, in each container). It is olive drab with a yellow ogive and yellow markings. It has a PIBD, M549 fuze, and Comp B filler. It arms between 18 to 30 meters and has a casualty radius of 15 meters.

We had two of the Mark 19s, which we mounted on the two Hummers that already had the gun mounts cut out of the roofs. The Ma Deuces weren't hard to get, the military had never really fully replaced them with the M312s. The M312s were used as man portable weapons because they weighed so much less, but the 100-year-old M2HB machineguns were loved by everyone and the Army and Marines refused to part with them as vehicle mounted weapons.

La Raza and NOA were more than welcome, we were ready for them. The M240 was still in inventory and we bought 6 more of those, the B models. We had about 8 too many of the M249s, they worked good until they jammed and then they were just exactly what Semper Fi said they were, a piece of chit.

While the military had phased out the M72 LAW in favor of the M136, AT-4, during Iraqi Freedom they found the new weapons to be too cumbersome in MOUT operations and re-introduced the LAW rocket. We had enough of those that the standard issue was 2 rockets per person with extras being carried in the pickups. We wouldn't be up against tanks if we were attacked and a LAW rocket could destroy the average vehicle.

o

"What are you building, a castle?"

"No, Sheriff, *The Castle* was a different story. We just put in a median barrier all the way around the 3 farms and added the fence on top of it. It won't stop a tank, but I don't believe we're going to have to go up against those.

"I thought you only had 2 .50 caliber machineguns."

"We did, until recently. We upgraded a bit and now have 8 of them plus a total of 10 of the .30 caliber machine guns. You can have the M249s, if you want them."

"What's wrong with them?"

"They jam and you have to dismantle them to clear the jam."

"No thank you. You consolidated the farms?"

"Yes, into a single corporation. When do you expect the trouble to start?"

"What trouble?"

"We assumed that since you increased the number of Reserve Deputies, you were ex-

pecting trouble."

"I hope not. But, from the look of things here, we could handle most anything that came our way."

"But I thought you were having trouble with La Raza and NOA in Garden City."

"That's not my jurisdiction. They haven't asked for mutual aid, so I stay out of it."

"We bought a fire engine."

"You guys are really into this preparedness thing aren't you?"

"Prepare for the worst and hope for the best, Sheriff. There are two ways to look at it, assume you can buy what you need when trouble comes or buy it before and hope you never have to use it. Besides, bad things happen in threes."

"We've had our 3."

"Maybe you have but, we were attacked, remember? That makes at least 4 and after 3 comes 9."

"You 4 old farts just like fighting."

"Nobody likes fighting, Sheriff, but we are rather good at it. We've had lots of practice. *Only the dead have seen an end to war.*" (Santayana)

"Say, would you happen to have a case of the homemade stuff?"

"You just bought a case not all that long ago."

"Unfortunately, I have friends and lately, I seem to have a lot of visitors."

"Maybe we should give you a volume discount."

"Maybe you should sell me a case at cost."

"You sly old fox. Ok, one time only. That will be one silver Eagle."

"\$25? Don't make much on the stuff do you?"

"Half the cost is in the bottles."

o

Another advantage to merging the farms was we could combine the crops and grow

nothing but soybeans on one, corn on the second and grass crops on the third and rotate entire farms every year. From this, we began to realize economies of scale. Furthermore, it was decided to combine all 120 acres of garden in a single location, at the end of the farm where the corn crop was planted. The folks in Lakin had come to depend of renting the garden spots and if we left 120 acres open at the end of the combined farm where the tall corn would otherwise block the view. An H-1 Alpha Hummer would maintain patrols around the farm 24/7, commencing the summer of '23.

They were old models; AMC stopped building the H-1 after the 2006 model year and converted the production line to building the military vehicles. These 2 vehicles were special; they were transitional vehicles and had the military diesel engine and electrical system and therefore the correct voltage for regular SINCGARS radios.

Used military vehicles were on the market, but they were nearly worn out. We bid on 12 of them at a government auction, brought them back to Garden City and had them completely rebuilt after which we installed the Ma Deuces. They were military model M1044A1 with the governors removed. We pulled the Mk-19s from the H-1 Alphas and replaced them with M240s. The Mk-19s went into the up-armored reconditioned HMMWVs. *Si vis pacem, para bellum*. Military HMMWVs aren't available to the public because they don't meet DOT standards for road vehicles, thus the complete rebuild to make them road legal.

Of course, you know who was driving the Hummers, our wives; and we old war dogs were manning the machine guns. Even Rachel, it really seemed unlikely we actually have to shoot the guns. Our schedule was 4 on and 12 off. The US may have stopped the Mexican Army dead in its tracks, but they didn't stop the Mexicans. They should have nuked Mexico City. Some of us know where half measures get you – nowhere.

o

"Dan, I got more of the Spearheads, so there's more than enough to go around."

"Are they the same as we already have, Tom?"

"Yeah, they're obsolete now so they were cheap and easy to get. I scored 500 of the spare battery packs and I have 24 of the 6 position battery chargers so we can go forever. The batteries are Lithium Ion Polymer batteries."

"How many of the radios do we have all together?"

"Those plus the original 144, we can even supply the Sheriff if needed."

"Do we have enough ACUs to outfit the Sheriff if needed?"

"Of course. I don't care what the Army calls them; they'll always be BDUs to me."

"There's also the ABU," Gunny laughed. That's the Air Force's new BDU. Digitalized tiger stripe using four soft earth tones consisting of tan, grey, green and blue colors. I still prefer the MARPAT, but Tom didn't get any of those."

"Gunny, I didn't have any contacts in the Corps."

"That's ok; I have six sets, Tom. I think that Hank does too, half Desert and half Woodland pattern."

"At least we'll know who was a Marine."

Even the Navy went to a new BDU in 2008, but its colors were modified to reflect the water environment.

In 2011, the military changed to MultiCam and none of our uniforms reflected the change. June worked her magic and Propper sourced the MultiCam.

o

SFC Randy Shughart was armed with an M14 rifle when he and MSGT Gary Gordon were dropped in to protect the crew of the 2nd Blackhawk Down. MSGT Gordon had a suppressed CAR15 and both men had M1911s. Every American soldier should have an M14 and a M1911 and McNamara should have all the M16s ever built shoved up his... He wasn't responsible for the M9, which was a Congressionally-directed Non-Developmental Initiative to standardize DOD with NATO and field one handgun for all United States armed services. Is Senator Kennedy free? He's probably too drunk to feel it anyway if we stuff the M9s up his... I know Beretta knows about the .45ACP caliber, the Cx4 Storm (carbine) uses it. Unfortunately, the matching pistol, the Px4 Storm doesn't, 9mm and 40S&W only.

o

The bad guys never come when you expect them, they almost always come when you aren't ready, hence the patrols. If you ever pulled guard duty on a holiday, you know how lonesome it can get. Nevertheless, we kept it up and patrols were roving on Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and even Christmas Day. Volunteers took over for us on New Year's Day, 2024. God, where did the time go it wasn't that long ago that we got back from Texas; and then I realized it had been over a year. We had returned home the weekend after Thanksgiving 2022.

We had done as much as we could to make the farm secure, can you imagine what it would have cost to put in a concrete block wall around the place? I calculated the cost, \$1,478,400 at \$35 per lineal foot of block not counting the foundation; and, that was only a 6' high wall. The median only cost us about \$500,000 in round numbers, but we did most of the work and the contractor only moved his slip form machine that he used to pour a continuous median. We inserted the posts and eventually put in the fence. The

half million bucks was just for the median. If the state had put it in, it probably would have cost \$10 million a mile, you know how the government is, 4 workers with 3 leaning on shovels. We used pig wire because we didn't have enough barbed wire.

We patrolled inside the wall and kept the gates closed, except during the summer. We had a total of 8 gates, a front and back gate for each of the old farms plus a north and south end gate. They were our weak spots and we had one guard on each gate. We were beginning to feel foolish, probably because Garden City, Lakin and MPR Ranch hadn't been attacked.

"Do you know what I wish?"

"What's that Gunny?"

"I wish we had something heavier than the Mk 19s."

"Right, you want tanks."

"Not necessarily, but those up armored HMMWVs didn't stop the insurgents in Iraqi."

"Neither did the Abrams, you must have seen the pictures."

"That had to be a fluke. You know, probably a bunch of 155mm artillery shells all wired together."

"I don't think so. Look at the history of armor. Every time someone came up with a better solution, somebody else came up with an alternative. Throughout human history, the development of armor has always run parallel to the development of increasingly efficient weaponry on the battlefield, creating an arms race of sorts across multiple civilizations to create better protection without sacrificing mobility."

"Our body armor is as good as the Interceptor body armor the military uses."

"I know, but the Army reneged on the troops after they bought their own."

"They told them they'd give them up to \$1,100, if I recall but wouldn't pay for the Dragon Skin."

"That's what happened all right. I don't know why they didn't send us all over there with it to begin with."

"They didn't have it to issue, Gunny. Most of the HMMWVs weren't armored to begin with. And then Iran began helping them with those shaped charges and they would wipe out a HMMWV in a New York minute."

"If you don't mind me asking, how long is a New York minute?"



"About ½ second, it's the time it takes the cab behind you to honk his horn when the light turns green."

"How long do you intend to keep up the patrols?" he asked.

"I can't say for sure, but probably until we die or the trouble with the Méxicans dies down, whichever comes first."

"That's optimistic."

"Isn't it? I don't really know, they've talked about taking back their Country since about 1966 when they formed the Brown Beret Movement. La raza (Spanish for "The race") or La Raza Méxicana is a term which Méxicans commonly use to denote mestizo (mixed European and Native Indian) ancestry. Outside of México, the term La Raza has also been adopted by members of other countries to recognize Hispanic heritage as one single race. "Día de la Raza" is widely celebrated across Hispano-America, including places as far as Puerto Rico, México, the Dominican Republic, Chile and Argentina."

"I can understand the people with Méxican ancestry try to reclaim their territory, but it seems all Hispanics support their cause."

"Confusing, isn't it?"

"Not as long as they use force instead of the political process to reclaim the land, it's not. Santa Anna ceded Texas and México ceded Arizona, California, Nevada, Utah and portions of New Mexico and Colorado in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. We bought the remainder of New Mexico and Arizona with the Gadsden Purchase for \$10 million. As originally envisioned, the purchase would have encompassed a much larger region, extending far enough south to include most of the current Méxican states of Coahuila, Chihuahua, Sonora, Nuevo Leon, and Tamaulipas as well as the entire Baja California peninsula."

"Manny explained that already, Gunny. At least the part about the Gadsden Purchase"

"So that's where I heard it."

"Right and now they want the land back because Santa Anna was responsible to giving it up or selling it and he kept what money México got."

"I suppose Russia wants Alaska back too, since we discovered oil up there but I doubt we'll give it up either."

"Especially not since they opened the second oil field. Of course it appears it didn't turn out as big as they thought or we wouldn't need oil so bad."

"Which, of course, is why I think we should have nuked México City. We could have used the oil."

"What for, they aren't building any more cars or trucks?"

"It would have given them something else to gripe about and they'd gone back to México to try and reclaim that part of their county."

We didn't of course and now we were sporadically fighting with Hispanic guerillas. They hadn't hit Kansas because they hadn't defeated Texas, New México, Arizona and California. If they ever did, we'd end up in a pitched battle trying to save our farms; which is why I told Gunny we'd probably be running patrols until we died. New Mexico was the 47th state and Arizona the 48th, admitted to the union in January and February of 1912.

o

After New Year's Day, we resumed the patrols until planting time. This year it came earlier and we were in the fields by late April. We all took a week off while the fields were plowed and readied them when they turned to farming with the Clydesdales again.

"Dan, I'm afraid that Rachel won't be able to continue on patrol."

"Getting to her?"

"No, her chronic lymphocytic leukemia has advanced a few stages."

"She's going to need treatment?"

"I'm afraid so, yes, chemo and radiation."

"She won't be up to doing much of anything, will she?"

"I doubt it."

"Who are we going to get to replace them?"

"How about Juan and Salina; he's half crippled from that shot to his leg, but could still man a gun."

"Ok. I'll ask him and make it very clear it will be a very important job."

o

Meanwhile, south of the border, down México way, and across the Gulf from Louisiana, the governments of México and Venezuela were hatching a plot. They had so much oil and no American market. They were shipping it to Russia and Nationalist China, in ex-

change for modern weapons and munitions. The US was not far away from getting a dose of its own medicine. México had raised an Army of 2 million this time and Venezuela had turned its oil into a powerful navy. That hot fiery Latin tempter had been replaced by a coolly reasoned plan. Venezuela wasn't as populous as México and couldn't raise a fighting force of near the size of México's. Thus they resorted to a Navy and Marines. México supplied the FX-05 rifles, Russia the ships and China the electronics. The ships they bought included 6 newly constructed Kirov class cruisers, 18 new constructed Sovremenny class destroyers and 18 of the Gepard class frigates. They also purchased 2 of the Ivan Rogov class LSDs at 14,000 tons.

México replaced the downed fighter aircraft with more of the same and got the Chinese to teach them fighter tactics. Their Air Force numbered 80 Mig-35s, 124 SU-39s and 18 Il-78 Midas aerial refueling tankers. Russia also sold them a fleet of new AN-12 Cubs, their equivalent to our C-130. They were slightly improved; Russian hadn't built any Cubs since the '70s.

Although Russia hadn't had much luck building nuclear subs, their diesel electric boats were magnificent especially using modern technology. They improved on the Kilo class, a step beyond the 636 export class and sold Venezuela 12 and México 6. All of the construction was ongoing while the US considered it appropriate to nuke México. Satellite photos showed México building massive hangars and a new port facility for the military. Other satellites showed Venezuela increasing their port capacity.

None of the military preparations México and Venezuela were making went unnoticed. The US was in a very difficult position, the military had been cut, another peace dividend, and faced with massive devastation from first the war and later Yellowstone, Congress had continued to cut back on the acquisition of aircraft and slowed other programs like the conversion of the M1A2 Abrams to M1A3 models. Very few ships had been launched, only the ones under construction. The future fleet was mostly on the drawing boards. Faced with aircraft accumulating hours, they were only building enough of the F-35s to replace retiring aircraft and no more of the costly F-22 Raptor. We only built 16 of the Virginia class submarines; the last one was started in 2009.

No new reactors had been licensed in several years and when licenses expired, they weren't renewed. Substantial portions of the US supply of clean coal were buried another several hundred feet by Yellowstone and we lacked the manufacturing capacity to build solar. A significant portion of the US electrical supply was now generated by wind turbines and natural gas supplied plants.

The only supply of gasoline generally available was E85 and it was expensive. Diesel fuel had generally been replaced by biodiesel but there weren't many cars on the roads these days. Anything that couldn't be converted to diesel or E85 probably didn't get driven unless the owner had money to burn; gasoline remained in the \$10 a gallon range. We weren't the breadbasket of the world any longer; we were doing good to feed ourselves.

It wasn't all bad; we were still the oldest Constitutional Republic in the world and probably the most powerful nation in terms of sheer military power. We had all those Nimitz class carriers, the Ford under construction, Guided Missile Cruisers and Destroyers and our submarine fleet. Not to mention the thing that really made people fear and hate us, our nuclear weapons. We'd now used them 3 times, against Japan, against the People's Republic of China and against México. If anything good had come out of what had happened in the 21st Century, it could be said that we quit trying to export Democracy. We have a good system and it works for us. That doesn't mean that it will work for everyone else.

These days, we were struggling to keep our head above water. We kept our Navy close to their home ports and didn't rush off every time someone else in the world had a problem. Everyone has problems and where was it written it was our job to solve them, for everyone? We had enough on our plate with La Raza and NOA picking away piece by piece.

I have always been fond of the West African proverb *Speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far*. This is the first known use of this phrase, which became a signature motto of Roosevelt's after he used it in a speech as Vice-President at the Minnesota State Fair.

*There is a homely adage which runs Speak softly and carry a big stick; you will go far. If the American nation will speak softly and yet build and keep at a pitch of highest training a thoroughly efficient Navy, the Monroe Doctrine will go far. (2 Sep 1901)*

*Any Country whose people conduct themselves well can count upon our hearty friendship. If a nation shows that it knows how to act with reasonable efficiency and decency in social and political matters, if it keeps order and pays its obligations, it need fear no interference from the United States. Chronic wrongdoing, or an impotence which results in a general loosening of the ties of civilized society, may in America, as elsewhere, ultimately require intervention by some civilized nation, and in the Western Hemisphere the adherence of the United States to the Monroe Doctrine may force the United States, however reluctantly, in flagrant cases of such wrongdoing or impotence, to the exercise of an international police power.*

*In the first place we should insist that if the immigrant who comes here in good faith becomes an American and assimilates himself to us, he shall be treated on an exact equality with everyone else, for it is an outrage to discriminate against any such man because of creed, or birthplace, or origin. But this is predicated upon the man's becoming in very fact an American, and nothing but an American... There can be no divided allegiance here. Any man who says he is an American, but something else also, isn't an American at all. We have room for but one flag, the American flag, and this excludes the red flag, which symbolizes all wars against liberty and civilization, just as much as it excludes any foreign flag of a nation to which we are hostile... We have room for but one language here, and that is the English language... and we have room for but one sole loyalty and that is a loyalty to the American people.*

Old Teddy gave a lot of speeches. No man is above the law and no man is below it; nor do we ask any man's permission when we require him to obey it. Obedience to the law is demanded as a right; not asked as a favor. If there is not the war, you don't get the great general; if there is not a great occasion, you don't get a great statesman; if Lincoln had lived in a time of peace, no one would have known his name.

## The Odyssey – Chapter 16

In the Year of Our Lord 2024 we'd elect another President, what would it be, number 46 or 47? You get so you don't keep track of these things. I served under Carter, Reagan, Bush Sr., Clinton, and Bush Jr. The military had been in constant flux, Reagan built it up and Clinton tore it down. The Defense Department had this concept they called the Objective Force Warrior. The bottom line was they wanted to turn every soldier into a computer console running the Windows operating system. He'd have a gun to shoot around corners, a TV screen to watch movies when there wasn't much fighting and about 10 rounds of ammo. With all the junk he'd be carrying, he couldn't carry much more than that. That \$85 ACU would be replaced by a fancy suit that had microclimate controls. They wanted to give him a weapon that was a 25mm cannon and a 5.56mm kinetic force weapon. Thank God that didn't work out.

If it were up to me, I'd give him an M14 semi-automatic rifle, a M1911 .45ACP pistol, 2 canteens, a shovel and ammo. The government got it into its head that combat casualties were unacceptable. During WW II, the total was about 61 million fatalities and didn't take into account the 3 million Indians who died due to famine in 1943. War is a nasty business and people die. That's how it was in the beginning and shall ever be.

During 8 years of Vietnam, the US lost about 58,000 soldiers, sailors, Marines and airmen. Before the war about 25,000 people died a year in traffic deaths, why didn't they protest that? Before we got out of Iraq, Coalition fatalities exceeded 3,000. I think that was an improvement over Vietnam and we were in many cases fighting the same enemy, insurgents, freedom fighters or whatever they called themselves. I prefer to call them rag heads. Our fatalities may have been lower if our weapons killed with one shot.

If we had to have a puny weapon, why didn't we buy the H&K G36? They could make them in their US plant along with USP Tactical's. H&K still made a 7.62x51mm rifle that with lightening could make a respectable main battle rifle. In the tradition of the G3 automatic rifle, roller locked accuracy reaches its full potential in the MSG90A1 sniper rifle. Taking the legendary HK manufacturing processes to their fullest extent, the MSG90A1 is capable of minute of angle accuracy, combined with the best features found on the PSG1, only with less weight, a removable scope platform, and open sights for field expediency. At only 14 lbs, the MSG90A1 is also a lower cost alternative to the PSG1, with no compromise in accuracy or reliability. It would weigh less without the scope. On the other hand, the Pentagon didn't consult with me. And, bless their hearts, Springfield Armory couldn't keep up with demand as it was.

Then there was that new HK-416/417 series. Heard about them, but that was all.

o

On the morning of August 6, 2024 Tom and Elle were on patrol and we were baling hay. I was driving the horses and John was on the wagon stacking the bales. I told Julia I'd appreciate it if she could bring us a cold drink around 10am. She called on the radio and

said she was on the way and if we were close to the house, stop and wait for her. We shut down the engine on the baler and I could see her riding this way, about a quarter mile off. All of a sudden the Mk 19 opened up.

The weapon fires about one round a second and we generally used short bursts 4-6 rounds. There was no mistaking the sound of Tom firing the machinegun or the return fire from the AK-47s. I yelled *Red Alert – south gate* into my radio and John and I began to un-harness the horses. *Julia, go back home, now.* I was only wearing the single holster rig with the 7½" Colt. John had his Winchester rifle and no handgun. In the time it took us to get to the gate, people had piled into to the surplus Hummers and made it there ahead of us.

I didn't have my Paramedic bag; I didn't carry when I was working. Mom was there and was working on Elle, Tom was dead. I went to help her, but Mom waived me away. I looked and Elle had been stitched as badly as Tom. The Dragon Skin doesn't protect your face and you couldn't recognize them if you hadn't known who they were.

"Who shot them? Gunny roared.

"Gunny, we heard the shots, but didn't see anybody."

"Then they had to be on foot, open the gate and we'll track them down. Someone call the Sheriff and get him out here, tell him we have 2 people murdered."

John and I loaded the bodies in the back of a pickup and we took them back to Mom's house. They roared out the gate with 3 Hummer's, one going west on the road, a second east and the third straight ahead. We left the bloody Hummer sit, the Sheriff would probably want to examine it.

o

".30 caliber?"

"It sounded like AK-47s, Sheriff."

"Did they find them?"

"No, they surrounded the section south of us and didn't find anybody so they checked the sections to the east and west. They find some boot prints and tire tracks, but no people."

"That's the second shooting this week; we had one outside of Deerfield yesterday."

"Any suspects?"

"We don't have a clue. Same caliber rifle, though."

"There are a lot of .30 caliber rifles in the county. As far as that goes, there are a lot of AKs."

"We're in the beginning of the harvest, and we just lost 2 of our roving guard, any suggestions?"

"Has everyone finished with the gardens?"

"Most of the crops, yes. They'll be back to harvest potatoes and squash."

"I can't spare any people Jim, you folks are going to have to handle this on your own. I have the hearse pick up their bodies. Where are you going to bury them?"

"Here on the farm, I suppose. I have no idea how to get in touch with their kids; I'll have to look for an address book."

"You fellas running the farm now?"

"Jason is the manager and the older folks ride patrol circuit, they're mostly retired. You heard about Rachel didn't you?"

"I heard she was taking chemo and radiation."

"She's in stage IV and has a few months left."

"Sorry to hear that, how is everyone else doing?"

"Haven't heard any complaints."

"Might be a good idea to double up your patrols, Jim."

"Ok, we'll do that, 2 vehicles at all times. I haven't heard much news lately what's going on?"

"There's a hurricane in the Gulf that supposed to hit the Gulf Coast. And, I heard a rumor that México has rebuilt their military."

"Are they going to try and invade again?"

"I suppose it's possible. Haven't really heard anything on the media about it though."

"What do you attribute these two shootings to?"

"Don't have a clue. If you didn't see anybody, it doesn't much help. We'll run those tire tracks but they might not mean a lot unless we know what kind of vehicle they were on."



The footprints might be useful and might not mean a thing."

Jason, Ray, Don, John and I got together to talk things over. Gunny, Dan and Hank might have been warriors once, but that was going on 20 years ago. They could still shoot, but they weren't as quick on the draw. Juan was younger, but crippled and more often than not he drove and let Salina man the gun. They might have 15 – 20 good years left in them, nobody but God knew that. All were in their 60s excluding Juan and Salina and Hank wasn't much good to anyone because of Rachel. We'd lost our first layer of defense. Trouble seemed to follow wherever we were. If it didn't come to us, we went looking for it.

We quickly agreed that we were going to take over for the parents. The next problem became who was going to tell them. We decided to have a dinner in the large Quonset hut that doubled as a school and a shelter and give them all the bad news at the same time. These were top ranking NCOs and we hoped they'd understand our decision. If they didn't that was just too bad, they bought the Hummers in the name of the corporation and collectively, we held a majority of the voting stock. I ask Mary to call Mom and set it up for Saturday night. I suggested surf and turf for dinner.

o

"Did everyone get enough to eat and drink?"

I was answered with a round of smiles.

"Now to the business of the night. We've talked it over and all of you are in your 60s, and a bit slower than when you were in your prime. I think what happened to Tom and Elle should make that perfectly clear. Effective tomorrow, we taking over patrol duties and you are free to go fishing or pursue your hobbies."

"Just a damn minute here, no one tells me what I'm going to do."

"Sorry Gunny, that's the way it is. The equipment belongs to the corporation and we held a vote. We'd appreciate any advice you have to offer, but it's a done deal."

"Jim, what brought this on?"

"Mom, on Monday they had shooting in Deerfield and on Tuesday, Tom and Elle were ambushed. The Sheriff recommended doubling our patrols until this business is over. There aren't enough of you to do that and let's face it, you are all slowing down."

"Anything else?"

"Just a rumor that México has rebuilt its Army and may invade again. None of us want to seem ungrateful but if fighting does break out, it's for young men and women while the more experienced among the group handling staff duties. In a way, it makes sense,

Mom has more medical experience and can run the basement clinic and I can be the combat medic, should it come to that."

"Is that your final word?"

"Afraid so."

"Well, at least the condemned people had a hearty meal."

"Do it your way Jim, and when you up to your butt in alligators, call Gunny."

"Don't call me boy, I'm retired. I think Dan and I are going fishing."

o

They put their own spin on what we told them and there was nothing we could say to change their attitudes. Elle was dead, Rachel was dying and Dan and Gunny were half mad. Tom was dead too and to tell the truth, Hank might as well be, he spent all of his time with Rachel. They been extremely lucky to make it this far and now it was our turn.

Dan and Gunny claimed they were going fishing. Every day, they got their fishing tackle around a left early in the morning. Since when do you need an H&K USP Tactical and an M1A to fish? We harvested the soybeans and the corn and the ladies put up the potatoes. The first snowfall came, and still, Gunny and Dan went fishing. Fishing for what? Sometimes they took Mom and Marilyn and I can't once remember them bringing home any fish they caught. Imagine Pancho and Cisco with grey hair, if you will.

o

"Where do they go every day, Jim?"

"If I knew, Don, I'd tell you. For all I know, they're trying to track down the people who shot Tom and Elle."

"Have you asked them?"

"They're still angry, I've avoiding being too nosy."

"I ask my mom and she told me they were fishing for whatever they could catch."

"I suppose I could get Julia or Mary to try and find out from Mom. The thing is, since they put together that Amazon bunch, they have very little free time."

o

"Did you ask, Jim?"

"Yes, but I don't understand the answer."

"What was it?"

"Mom said, *Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch. We are all called to be fishers of men.*"

"Did she start up a Ministry?"

"I don't think so, unless it's called the First Church of the Loaded Rifle."

"I doubt that. It looks like snow tonight, is the blower ready to go?"

"It mounts on Dan's pickup and he takes it every day."

"Give him one of the H-1 Hummers to drive, we're going to need to keep the inside road clear."

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"But we need the pickup to mount the snow blower, Dan."

"Fine, give us one of the M1044s with a Ma Deuce installed."

"Are you going to shoot the fish?"

"Is there a problem with that? Make it a M240; we can carry more ammo that way."

"What kind of fish are you trying to catch?"

"Suckers."

"Nobody eats carp."

"A sucker ain't a carp; it's a different fish entirely. Carp are Cyprinidae and suckers are Catostomidae."

Dan's answer was ambiguous at best; a sucker could be a fish or a gullible person. It would make more sense for them to have a machinegun if they were fishing for men.

"Sheriff, Jim Williams. I'm looking for some information. Do you have Dan and Gunny working on those murders?"

"Yes and no, Jim. They're looking all right, but I didn't put them up to it. We had a lot of clues but no real suspects in either shooting. They came by the office and I let them

copy the file. They've been out nosing around for a while now. Why did you want to know?"

"I asked Dan for his pickup to mount the snow blower and he insisted on an up-armored Hummer with a machinegun."

"We haven't come to that yet; I have a word with them."

"What do you mean by that?"

"México is amassing troops."

"We'll just nuke them again."

"I don't think so; Russia issued a statement that said any further attacks on México with nuclear weapons would be considered an attack against them requiring a full retaliatory response."

"When did they issue the statement?"

"October 22nd."

"I think maybe they mean it Sheriff, review the transcript of JFK's address to the nation on October 22, 1962."

"I have and the only difference was he told fewer lies than the Russians. The compromise satisfied no one, though it was a particularly sharp embarrassment for Khrushchev and the Soviet Union because the withdrawal of American missiles was not made public. They were seen as retreating from circumstances that they had started – though if played well, it could have looked like just the opposite: the USSR gallantly saving the world from nuclear holocaust by not insisting on restoring the nuclear equilibrium. Khrushchev's fall from power two years later can be partially linked to Politburo embarrassment at both Khrushchev's eventual concessions to the US and his ineptitude in precipitating the crisis in the first place.

"US military commanders were not happy with the result either. General LeMay told the President that it was 'the greatest defeat in our history' and that the US should invade immediately. This was considered by John F. Kennedy but cooler heads would prevail and used his patience to his advantage and ran a successful quarantine on Cuba.

"For Cuba, it was a betrayal by the Soviets whom they had trusted, given that the decisions on putting an end to the crisis had been made exclusively by Kennedy and Khrushchev."

"I think that was Kennedy's item number 3."

"You read up on the crisis, and you're right. His exact words were: *Third: It shall be the policy of this Nation to regard any nuclear missile launched from Cuba against any nation in the Western Hemisphere as an attack by the Soviet Union on the United States, requiring a full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union.* Russia is rich with oil from their sources and México and Venezuela. I wouldn't be surprised if they've upgraded their nukes. They have a great rocket capacity; they put Soyuz aloft when we couldn't fly the shuttle."

"Getting back to the folks, what should I do?"

"Let them nose around. Who knows, they might find something."

o

Massive Mexican buildup, La Raza and NOA raising hell and Russia backing the whole thing with a threat to use nuclear weapons. I wonder who wrote the script, Robert A. Heinlein, Isaac Asimov or Arthur C. Clarke. Furthermore, if we construed Israel wiping out the Middle Eastern counties as Armageddon, had we already fought the battle of Har Megiddo and entered the 1,000 years of tribulation? Because no one knew for sure, all we could do was fight the fight that came our way.

Despite the song's claim, nobody lives forever. You didn't know your grandfather when he was your age, but he knew you and remembered when he was your age. People never really change as a whole and what our father's did we'll end up doing, eventually. My father was a soldier, killed in Ramadi. My foster father was killed by FEMA. Who would kill me, La Raza, NOA or some wanttobe thieves trying to break through the fence?

Our once proud nation was a shambles what with the pandemic, the war, Yellowstone and yet another war. The nation had been assembled piece by piece until it had 50 states. If you watched *10.5* and its sequel, *10.5 Apocalypse*, you saw the Country disassemble itself, but that was Mother Nature taking her revenge, or something. It was hard to tell from the movies, they weren't really that good. We maintained a 2 vehicle patrol, one carrying an Mk 19 and the other a Ma Deuce. We didn't experience any more trouble.

o

"Gunny, the kids taking over like they did couldn't have come at a better time; I doubt the Sheriff really has any leads. You saw the file he had, pictures of tire tracks and boot prints but no named suspects."

"How far back did Tom and you go?"

"I knew him from my first duty assignment after AIT. He didn't move to Logistics until his second tour."

"That's a strange move; I'd have thought a person would want to get out of supply and into the infantry."

"He had problems with a supply Sergeant during his first tour and said any idiot could do it better than that man did."

"What do we know that can help us?"

"The width of the tire track for starters."

"And just what do you intend to do, measure every tire in Hamilton, Kearny and Finney Counties?"

"I'll admit that it isn't much but if we have to, yes. Our job will be easier, that aren't that many vehicles that run on diesel or E85."

"That tire, what brand was it?"

"According to the tread pattern, a Goodyear Wrangler SilentArmor tire size 70R."

"That will narrow the search."

"It's an off-road tire so it may be a SUV or a pickup."

"With a diesel or E85 engine. That will narrow the search. What are we going to do when we find a vehicle with matching tires?"

"Tell the Sheriff. It might not be the people who did this."

"How many vehicles do you figure?"

"Two or three thousand to check, maybe one-third of those will be pickups or SUVs. I don't know how many vehicles there are still running."

Gunny and I weren't having much luck, there were too many vehicles to check and we started to write down license numbers of the vehicles we eliminated. That's when we enlisted June and Marilyn to help us. It was quite a job and June set up a spreadsheet that sorted the license numbers to help us out. The longer the list got, the longer it took. It may have been impossible before when so many vehicles were running. Then the kids started to nose around about what we were doing. We told them we were fishing, just not what we were fishing for.

"I'd like to swap out an H-1 for your pickup, Dan."

"We're using the pickup."

"But we need the pickup to mount the snow blower, Dan."

"Fine, give us one of the M1044s with a Ma Deuce installed."

"Are you going to shoot the fish?"

"Is there a problem with that? Make it a M240; we can carry more ammo that way."

"What kind of fish are you trying to catch?"

"Suckers."

"Nobody eats carp."

"A sucker ain't a carp; it's a different fish entirely. Carp are Cyprinidae and suckers are Catostomidae."

I meant sucker as in a gullible human being, but maybe that wasn't the right word. Stupid, would be more correct, but I didn't know any fish by that name. The only reason whoever did this thing got away with it was because the Sheriff didn't have time to check the tires on 3,000 motor vehicles. We were guessing, we didn't know how many vehicles were actually running or if the perps were actually from Kearny County. We eventually exhausted our search of Kearny County and flipped a coin to see if we'd go to Hamilton or Finney County. We had to stop looking in February, Rachel died.

"I'm darned sorry about Rachel Hank, what are you going to do now?"

"I haven't decided Gunny. I don't believe she weighed 85 pounds when she died and once it began to spread, she was miserable."

"You welcome to join us when you're up to it."

"Just what in the hell are you fishing for?"

"The people that killed Tom and Elle."

"I thought the Sheriff didn't have a clue."

"We decided the tire was a Goodyear Wrangler SilentArmor tire size 70R. We've checked all of Kearny County and are nearly done with Hamilton County. We've been keeping a list of the vehicles we've checked and I'd say we're about ½ done."

## The Odyssey – Chapter 17

"I don't know, maybe if Juan and Salina will ride with me and we can get the kids to cut loose with another M1044 and a machine gun, I'll think about it. You've heard the news haven't you? México is setting up to attack the US again."

"Yeah, we heard, but I don't believe it. If they tried, we'd just nuke them again."

"Not hardly. Russia said that any nuclear attack against México would be considered as an attack on them requiring a full retaliatory response."

"So it's going to be a real war? One of those down in the dirt, hand-to-hand combat kind of wars."

"Yes, the kind of war we were trained for Gunny."

"Get them to give you a Ma Deuce, we only have 2 Mk 19s and they won't give them up."

"How much fuel do you carry?"

"We have two on-board tanks totaling 51.5 gallons. They're out of the 2006 H-1 Alpha with the Duramax 6600 diesel engine. We have about an 800 mile range."

"What did you put in the HMMWVs when you had them rebuilt?"

"That engine and the new brake system plus the Allison transmission and transfer case out of the H-1 Alpha."

"Got enough power to carry the armor, don't they?"

"With a little left over."

"I'll talk to Ray about it and see. He might want to move into the big house now."

o

Hank joined us about the time we started Finney County. He said he would have joined us sooner, had he not had to switch houses with Ray. Ray immediately set out to put in a bomb shelter next to the big house that was the same as the shelter Randy and June built. I can only guess what he was thinking, maybe that the US would try to call Russia's bluff, which quite naturally, made one wonder if Russia was really bluffing. Everyone had once said, Khrushchev blinked ending the Cuban Missile Crisis. That was before my time, but I don't believe JFK was bluffing. Our forces were at DEFCON 2, which was only a heartbeat away from launch. It was better to die free than live in slavery, JFK wasn't bluffing and neither were the Russians now.



"Here's a copy of the list, Hank. Add the license numbers of all vehicles you eliminate to it and June will update it tonight. You'll have the update in the morning."

We finally found a SUV that would match in Garden City. We reported it to the Sheriff and continued looking. Later the same day, Hank found a second match. When we found the first vehicle, we assumed it was the one we were looking for but the Sheriff ran the plate and said it belonged to the wife of a member of the Garden City PD. He told us to keep looking while they questioned her and her husband. When we found the second vehicle, the Sheriff said, *could be but, keep looking*. The first was a Tahoe, the second a Yukon. Their tires were P265/70R16. The Sheriff said it could also be a Chevy Suburban, Ford Escape or Mercury Mariner if it was a SUV.

Sometimes, a CSI is able to find tracks where a vehicle turned and compute the wheel-base. Kearny County didn't have a CSI. We kept looking and only found one more vehicle with the same tires, another Yukon. We felt vindicated until the Sheriff told us that the owners of the vehicles had iron tight alibis. If you've ever watched the old show Cold Case Files hosted by Bill Kurtis on A&E channel, then you've seen how investigations go cold. Kurtis, by the way, is from Kansas.

Except, in this case the case wasn't cold, the vehicle owners, all 3 of them, had alibis, but indicated that their SUVs had been parked and could have been used by someone else. The Kansas Bureau of Investigation was brought in and took impressions of the tires on all 3 vehicles and got a match to the car belonging to the wife of the GCPD officer. The evidence was a small cut in the right rear tire and they had the vehicle but not the perpetrator. All of the vehicles had been cleaned several times by the carwash to wash the salt off and clean the interior and KBI couldn't find any fingerprints, cigarette butts or even a gum wrapper. Now the case went cold.

◦

"We're done fishing, fellas, if you'd like, we can run patrols again."

"Catch anything?"

"We found the vehicle use in the shootings. It was a GMC Yukon belonging to a lady in Garden City. She had alibis for both days and the Sheriff brought in the KBI, but the case went cold."

"We have the patrols covered but have you heard about México?"

"Hank filled us in, what's new?"

"They moved their troops to 40 miles south of the border and set up camps. They aren't doing anything at the moment; it's as if they're waiting for something."

"We're not up to date, what is our military doing?"

"About the same, opposing forces stationed opposite the Mexican forces and they brought the Air Force back in. You heard about the Russian threat?"

"Yeah, and I think I'd be inclined to believe it. Gunny agrees with me. We aren't that far from Big Bend County and even closer to El Paso. Let's us know if you need us."

"Sure. We got the bourbon bottled and distributed and the new batch in the barrels. All of the biodiesel tanks are full up and we're keeping 10,000 gallons of virgin oil in reserve. It looks like a good year Dan; Mom and you should get a nice check when we do the income statement."

"Did you butcher beef, hogs, chickens and turkeys?"

"All your freezers are full."

"Good. Oh, by the way, when the Sheriff shows up for another case of bourbon, only charge him \$25. Tell him it's a one-time deal; it isn't but let him know."

o

Hank was more of his old self according to Ray. Apparently the lingering illness Rachel had nearly wore him out. He hadn't cussed a lot, Rachel wouldn't allow it, but the same couldn't be said for our other Marine. The older he got, the more Gunny cussed, almost as if the cussing made up for his advancing age. Some of the muscle had turned to flab and his eyes lost their flexibility. He'd still be a good man to have on your side in a battle. They posted a \$25,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the people responsible to killing Tom and Elle.

Ray need an air filter and blast valves but the internet address he had for Utah Shelter Systems didn't work. He went searching and found a new source. They had a nice website now and still carried the ANDAIR LUWA components. Their waiting period for a complete shelter was now over a year but they'd ship parts right away. He could get what he wanted in 3 days by truck. Gunny and Marilyn finally had a shelter, they'd move all the supplies out of the shelter Paul had built and they only thing they lacked was the air filter. Ray bought 2.

At this point we didn't know if the US would succumb to Russia's threat and it was better to be prepared than to wish you were. Did America realize in September of 1941 that war was inevitable? The Japanese hadn't attacked and the US wasn't at war with anyone. They must have realized that it was just a matter of time, but in 1941, no one had nuclear weapons or airplanes that could reach the US mainland. Intercontinental missiles existed only in the mind of Wernher von Braun. They didn't begin the A-4 (V-2) rocket program until 1942 and Germany never succeeded in developing nuclear weapons although some claim the Japanese did. In a side note, refined uranium destined for

Japan was surrendered to the US and may well have been used in the bombs we dropped on Hiroshima or Nagasaki.

Wolfgang Hirschfeld was radioman on U-109 under Korvettenkapitän Hans-Georg Fischer and then under Kapitänleutnant Heinrich Bleichrodt when they hunted in American waters during the late phases of Operation Paukenschlag, or Drumbeat. At the end of the war, he was Oberfunkmeister (Master Chief - Radio) aboard U-234, the converted Type X-B mine-layer on her way to Tokyo, and in her belly was a vast array of highly secret people and materiel.

Personnel aboard included a General der Luftwaffe (General Ulrich Kessler), who was to take over the Luftwaffe liaison duties in Tokyo, a Naval Fleet Judge Advocate to try cases of German traitors in Japan, Dr. Heinz Schlicke (renowned German scientist later grabbed up by the USA in Operation Paperclip) and two Japanese technical officers, who committed suicide during the voyage.

Technical material on board included the newest torpedoes, two Me-262 jet fighters (crated) and all the technological data necessary for the Japanese to begin building these very fast fighters - and there were 560 kilos of uranium oxide consigned to the Imperial Japanese Army for use in the Japanese atomic bomb. Unknown to most, Japan test fired their first nuclear device a week before the Americans test fired theirs. Japan merely lacked the fissionable material to make the bomb - and U-234 was bringing it to the Empire.

Page 3

Dr. Zippe invented the Zippe-Type centrifuge which has now become the easiest way to make fuel for reactors as well as weapons of terrifying power.

In his first ever broadcast interview he told BBC how he was kidnapped soon after the end of WWII and held prisoner in the Soviet Union where he was ordered to find an easy way of producing uranium's rare U-235 isotope. Having done as he was asked he was freed by the Soviets only for the Americans to order him to repeat the process for their benefit.

Years later his plans were stolen by the Pakistani government who sold the secrets of the Zippe-Type on to North Korea and Iran allowing them to develop their nuclear industry. Another German scientist sold his plans to Saddam Hussein who used them as the basis for his attempt to acquire the bomb.

Dr. Zippe remained philosophical about the chaos his invention had caused around the globe. "With a kitchen knife you can peel a potato or kill your neighbor," he said. "It's up to governments to use the centrifuge for the benefit of mankind."

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"We ought to go to Texas and kick those damned Méxicans' butts."

"We ought to do a lot of things Gunny, but I'm too damned tired. If you'll just wait, I'm sure they'll come to us."

"How do you know?"

"I read ahead?"

"Cut the bull, how do you know?"

"Anytime we didn't go looking for trouble it's found us. I overheard Jim and some of the others talking and they seem to think we have some of kind of manifest destiny. Now, technically, Manifest Destiny is the belief that the United States had a mission to expand, spreading its form of democracy and freedom. Sometimes advocates said there was divine sanction (but atheists were often just as supportive). Advocates of Manifest Destiny believed that expansion was not only good, but that it was obvious ("manifest") and inevitable ("destiny"). Originally a political catch phrase of the 19th century, Manifest Destiny eventually became a standard historical term, often used as a synonym for the territorial expansion of the United States across North America towards the Pacific Ocean. That understanding of the term probably got us to the position we're in. However, they voiced concern that it was our destiny to be fighting to the very end."

"Suits me, a Marine should die with a rifle in his hands."

"I was thinking how nice it would be to have a couple of drinks, get some tail, fall asleep and never wake up."

"Die in bed? Not on your life!"

"MacArthur claimed old soldier's never die, they just fade away. His final speech to Congress included that very statement."

*I am closing my 52 years of military service. When I joined the Army, even before the turn of the century, it was the fulfillment of all of my boyish hopes and dreams. The world has turned over many times since I took the oath on the plain at West Point, and the hopes and dreams have long since vanished, but I still remember the refrain of one of the most popular barrack ballads of that day which proclaimed most proudly that 'old soldiers never die; they just fade away.' And like the old soldier of that ballad, I now close my military career and just fade away, an old soldier who tried to do his duty as God gave him the light to see that duty.*

"His problem was that the Philippines government made him a Field Marshall. He was one of our most decorated soldiers, but still a jerk."

US Decorations:

Medal of Honor; Distinguished Service Cross with two oak leaf clusters; Army Distinguished Service Medal with four oak leaf clusters; Navy Distinguished Service Medal; Distinguished Flying Cross; Silver Star with one silver and one bronze oak leaf cluster; Bronze Star Medal with Valor device; Purple Heart with one oak leaf cluster; Presidential Unit Citation with 1 silver and 1 bronze oak leaf cluster; Air Medal; Philippine Campaign Medal; Mexican Service Medal; World War I Victory Medal with five battle clasps (Aisne-Marne, Champagne-Marne, St. Mihiel, Meuse-Argonne and Defensive Sector); Army of occupation of Germany Medal; American Defense Service Medal with Foreign Service clasp; Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with two silver service stars and arrowhead device; World War II Victory Medal; Army of Occupation Medal with Japan clasp; National Defense Service Medal; Korean Service Medal with three bronze service stars and arrowhead device; United Nations Service Medal; Command Aviator Badge; Army General Staff Identification Badge; Fourteen Overseas Service Bars; Expert Badge with Rifle and Pistol bars

Foreign awards:

Knight Grand Cross of the Military Division of the Most Honourable Order of Bath; French Légion d'honneur; French Croix de Guerre; French Medaille Militaire; Australian Pacific Star; Philippine medal of Valor; Philippine Distinguish Service Star; Philippine Legion of Honor, Degree of Chief Commander; Philippine Defense Medal with one service star; Philippine Liberation Medal with four service stars; Republic of the Philippines Presidential Unit Citation; Philippine Independence Medal; Order of the Belgium Crown; Belgian Croix de Guerre; Belgian Order of the Cross; Czechoslovakian Order of the White Lion; Polish Virtuti Militari; Polish Grand Cross of Polonia Restituta; Grand Cross Netherlands Order of Orange-Nassau; Yugoslavian Order of the White Eagle; Japanese Order of the Rising Sun; Republic of Korean Presidential Unit Citation; Korean War Service Medal; Korean Grand Cross of the Order of Military Valour and Merit; Italian Grand Cross of the Military Order; Italian War Cross; Cuban Grand Cross of Military Merit; Ecuadorian Grand Cross Order of Abdon Calderon; Chinese Cordon of Pau Ting; Greek Medal of Honor; Guatemalan Cross of Military Merit; Hungarian Grand Cross of Military Merit; Order of Mexican Military Merit; and, Grand Cross order of Romanian Military Merit

"What no Knights Cross of the War Merit Cross in Gold or Order of Victory?" I asked

"Only Eisenhower got the USSR Order of Victory and only two men got that particular Knights Cross."

"Next question. If he was so busy accepting Medals, when did he find time to fight?"

"Gave pretty speeches, have you ever heard his Duty, Honor County speech?"

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General Westmoreland, General Groves, distinguished guests, and gentlemen of the Corps. As I was leaving the hotel this morning, a doorman asked me, "Where are you bound for, General?" and when I replied, "West Point," he remarked, "Beautiful place, have you ever been there before?"

*No human being could fail to be deeply moved by such a tribute as this, coming from a profession I have served so long and a people I have loved so well. It fills me with an emotion I cannot express. But this award is not intended primarily for a personality, but to symbolize a great moral code—the code of conduct and chivalry of those who guard this beloved land of culture and ancient descent. That is the meaning of this medallion. For all eyes and for all time, it is an expression of the ethics of the American soldier.*

*That I should be integrated in this way with so noble an ideal arouses a sense of pride and yet of humility which will be with me always.*

*"Duty," "Honor," "Country" – those three hallowed words reverently dictate what you ought to be, what you can be, what you will be. They are your rallying point to build courage when courage seems to fail, to regain faith when there seems to be little cause for faith, to create hope when hope becomes forlorn.*

*Unhappily, I possess neither that eloquence of diction, that poetry of imagination, nor that brilliance of metaphor to tell you all that they mean.*

*The unbelievers will say they are but words, but a slogan, but a flamboyant phrase. Every pedant, every demagogue, every cynic, every hypocrite, every troublemaker, and, I am sorry to say, some others of an entirely different character, will try to downgrade them even to the extent of mockery and ridicule.*

*But these are some of the things they do. They build your basic character. They mold you for your future roles as the custodians of the nation's defense. They make you strong enough to know when you are weak, and brave enough to face yourself when you are afraid.*

*They teach you to be proud and unbending in honest failure, but humble and gentle in success; not to substitute words for action; not to seek the path of comfort, but to face the stress and spur of difficulty and challenge; to learn to stand up in the storm, but to have compassion on those who fall; to master yourself before you seek to master others; to have a heart that is clean, a goal that is high; to learn to laugh, yet never forget how to weep; to reach into the future, yet never neglect the past; to be serious, yet never take yourself too seriously; to be modest so that you will remember the simplicity of true greatness; the open mind of true wisdom, the meekness of true strength.*

*They give you a temperate will, a quality of imagination, a vigor of the emotions, a freshness of the deep springs of life, a temperamental predominance of courage over timidity, an appetite for adventure over love of ease. They create in your heart the sense of wonder, the unflinching hope of what next, and the joy and inspiration of life. They teach*

*you in this way to be an officer and a gentleman.*

*And what sort of soldiers are those you are to lead? Are they reliable? Are they brave? Are they capable of victory?*

*Their story is known to all of you. It is the story of the American man at arms. My estimate of him was formed on the battlefields many, many years ago, and has never changed. I regarded him then, as I regard him now, as one of the world's noblest figures; not only as one of the finest military characters, but also as one of the most stainless.*

*His name and fame are the birthright of every American citizen. In his youth and strength, his love and loyalty, he gave all that mortality can give. He needs no eulogy from me, or from any other man. He has written his own history and written it in red on his enemy's breast.*

*But when I think of his patience under adversity, of his courage under fire, and of his modesty in victory, I am filled with an emotion of admiration I cannot put into words. He belongs to history as furnishing one of the greatest examples of successful patriotism. He belongs to posterity as the instructor of future generations in the principles of liberty and freedom. He belongs to the present, to us, by his virtues and by his achievements.*

*In twenty campaigns, on a hundred battlefields, around a thousand campfires, I have witnessed that enduring fortitude, that patriotic self-abnegation, and that invincible determination which have carved his statue in the hearts of his people.*

*From one end of the world to the other, he has drained deep the chalice of courage. As I listened to those songs of the glee club, in memory's eye I could see those staggering columns of the First World War, bending under soggy packs on many a weary march, from dripping dusk to drizzling dawn, slogging ankle deep through mire of shell-pocked roads; to form grimly for the attack, blue-lipped, covered with sludge and mud, chilled by the wind and rain, driving home to their objective, and for many, to the judgment seat of God.*

*I do not know the dignity of their birth, but I do know the glory of their death. They died unquestioning, uncomplaining, with faith in their hearts, and on their lips the hope that we would go on to victory. Always for them: Duty, Honor, Country. Always their blood, and sweat, and tears, as they saw the way and the light.*

*And twenty years after, on the other side of the globe, against the filth of dirty foxholes, the stench of ghostly trenches, the slime of dripping dugouts, those boiling suns of the relentless heat, those torrential rains of devastating storms, the loneliness and utter desolation of jungle trails, the bitterness of long separation of those they loved and cherished, the deadly pestilence of tropic disease, the horror of stricken areas of war.*

*Their resolute and determined defense, their swift and sure attack, their indomitable*

*purpose, their complete and decisive victory – always victory, always through the bloody haze of their last reverberating shot, the vision of gaunt, ghastly men, reverently following your password of Duty, Honor, Country.*

*The code which those words perpetuate embraces the highest moral laws and will stand the test of any ethics or philosophies ever promulgated for the uplift of mankind. Its requirements are for the things that are right, and its restraints are from the things that are wrong. The soldier, above all other men, is required to practice the greatest act of religious training – sacrifice. In battle and in the face of danger and death, he discloses those divine attributes which his Maker gave when he created man in his own image. No physical courage and no brute instinct can take the place of the Divine help which alone can sustain him. However horrible the incidents of war may be, the soldier who is called upon to offer and to give his life for his Country, is the noblest development of mankind.*

*You now face a new world, a world of change. The thrust into outer space of the satellite, spheres and missiles marked the beginning of another epoch in the long story of mankind – the chapter of the space age. In the five or more billions of years the scientists tell us it has taken to form the earth, in the three or more billion years of development of the human race, there has never been a greater, a more abrupt or staggering evolution. We deal now not with things of this world alone, but with the illimitable distances and as yet unfathomed mysteries of the universe. We are reaching out for a new and boundless frontier. We speak in strange terms: of harnessing the cosmic energy; of making winds and tides work for us; of creating unheard synthetic materials to supplement or even replace our old standard basics; of purifying sea water for our drink; of mining ocean floors for new fields of wealth and food; of disease preventatives to expand life into the hundred of years; of controlling the weather for a more equitable distribution of heat and cold, of rain and shine; of space ships to the moon; of the primary target in war, no longer limited to the armed forces of an enemy, but instead to include his civil populations; of ultimate conflict between a united human race and the sinister forces of some other planetary galaxy; of such dreams and fantasies as to make life the most exciting of all time.*

*And through all this welter of change and development your mission remains fixed, determined, inviolable. It is to win our wars. Everything else in your professional career is but corollary to this vital dedication. All other public purpose, all other public projects, all other public needs, great or small, will find others for their accomplishments; but you are the ones who are trained to fight.*

*Yours is the profession of arms, the will to win, the sure knowledge that in war there is no substitute for victory, that if you lose, the Nation will be destroyed, that the very obsession of your public service must be Duty, Honor, Country.*

*Others will debate the controversial issues, national and international, which divide men's minds. But serene, calm, aloof, you stand as the Nation's war guardians, as its lifeguards from the raging tides of international conflict, as its gladiators in the arena of*



*battle. For a century and a half you have defended, guarded and protected its hallowed traditions of liberty and freedom, of right and justice.*

*Let civilian voices argue the merits or demerits of our processes of government. Whether our strength is being sapped by deficit financing indulged in too long, by federal paternalism grown too mighty, by power groups grown too arrogant, by politics grown too corrupt, by crime grown too rampant, by morals grown too low, by taxes grown too high, by extremists grown too violent; whether our personal liberties are as firm and complete as they should be.*

*These great national problems are not for your professional participation or military solution. Your guidepost stands out like a tenfold beacon in the night: Duty, Honor, Country.*

*You are the leaven which binds together the entire fabric of our national system of defense. From your ranks come the great captains who hold the Nation's destiny in their hands the moment the war tocsin sounds.*

*The long gray line has never failed us. Were you to do so, a million ghosts in olive drab, in brown khaki, in blue and gray, would rise from their white crosses, thundering those magic words: Duty, Honor, Country.*

*This does not mean that you are warmongers. On the contrary, the soldier above all other people prays for peace, for he must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war. But always in our ears ring the ominous words of Plato, that wisest of all philosophers: "Only the dead have seen the end of war."*

*The shadows are lengthening for me. The twilight is here. My days of old have vanished – tone and tints. They have gone glimmering through the dreams of things that were. Their memory is one of wondrous beauty, watered by tears and coaxed and caressed by the smiles of yesterday. I listen then, but with thirsty ear, for the witching melody of faint bugles blowing reveille, of far drums beating the long roll.*

*In my dreams I hear again the crash of guns, the rattle of musketry, the strange, mournful mutter of the battlefield. But in the evening of my memory I come back to West Point. Always there echoes and re-echoes: Duty, Honor, Country.*

*Today marks my final roll call with you. But I want you to know that when I cross the river, my last conscious thoughts will be of the Corps, and the Corps, and the Corps.*

*I bid you farewell.*

◦

"He talked a lot, didn't he?"

"He wasn't a dumb as he looked, he turned down a promotion to 6-star General."

## The Odyssey – Chapter 18

"Why?"

"It meant a pay cut."

"Gunny, you take MacArthur, I want Patton. He could cuss better anyway. Patton deliberately cultivated a flashy, distinctive image in the belief that this would motivate his troops. He was usually seen wearing a highly polished helmet, riding pants, revolver (a Colt .45 and later the addition of a .357 Smith and Wesson), and high cavalry boots. His vehicles carried oversized rank insignia and loud horns. His speech was riddled with profanities. American soldiers respected Patton as a general and as a soldier because he inspired patriotic feeling, and because the coarse toughness of his image and character appeared well-suited to the conditions of battle. His theatrics were admired by many, so much so that upon his death upwards of 20,000 soldiers volunteered to be pall bearers at his funeral. This came as a surprise to the American populace, as the media had often portrayed Patton's armies as disliking him."

"They probably just wanted to make sure he was dead. *All right, they're on our left, they're on our right, they're in front of us, they're behind us...they can't get away this time.*"

"Who said that?"

"A real Marine, Chesty Puller."

"Figures, he was a distant relative of Patton."

"He was a Marine!"

o

It didn't come to blows, for all of MacArthur's medals, Gunny was a Chesty Puller fan and I liked Patton. Since they were distant cousins, it was 'all in the family'. There were a lot of great military leaders in the history of the world, including: Abercromby, Ralph; Alaric The Goth; Alcibiades; Alexander the Great; Alexander, Harold Rupert; Alfred The Great; Allenby, Edmund Henry H.; Arnold, Henry H. (Hap); Attila the Hun; Babur, Zahiruddin Muhammad; Bayezid I; Belisarius; Berthier, Louis Alexandre; Bolivar, Simon; Bonaparte, Napoleon; Boru, Brian; Bradley, Omar Nelson; Brooke, Alan Francis (Alanbrooke); Bruce, Robert the; Burgoyne, John; Caesar, Julius; Campbell, Colin; Canute; Carnot, Lazare Nicolas Marguerite; Charlemagne (Charles the Great); Charles XII; Chiang Kai-shek; Chief Joseph; Churchill, John (Duke of Marlborough); Churchill, Winston S.; Clovis of the Franks; Cochrane, Thomas; Comte de Saxe, Hermann-Maurice; Constantine The Great; Cortés, Hernando; Cromwell, Oliver; Cyrus the Great; Dayan, Moshe; De Bourbon, Louis II; de Gribeauval, Jean Baptiste Vaquette; de San Martin, Jose; de Toledo, Fernando Alvarez; de Turenne, Henri de la Tour d'Auvergne; De Vau-

ban, Sebastien Le Prestre; deConde, Louis II de Bourbon, Prince; Dewey, George; Doenitz, Karl; Douhet, Giulio; Drake, Francis; Edward I; Edward The Black Prince; Eisenhower, Dwight David; El Cid; Eugene of Savoy; Farragut, David Glasgow; Fernadez Gonzalo de Cordoba; Fisher, John Arbuthnot; Foch, Ferdinand; Frederick II (The Great); Fuller, John Frederick Charles; Garibaldi, Giuseppe; Geronimo; Giap, Vo Nguyen; Grant, Ulysses Simpson; Greene, Nathanael; Guderian, Heinz; Gustavus Adolphus II; Halsey, William, Jr.; Hannibal; Heihachiro Togo; Hitler, Adolf; Houston, Sam; Il Sung, Kim; Jackson, Thomas "Stonewall"; Joan of Arc; Jomini, Antoine Henri; Kaishek, Chiang; Kemal, Mustafa (Attaturk); Khalid ibn al-Walid; Khan, Genghis; Khan, Kublai; Kitchener, Horatio Herbert; Konev, Ivan Stepanovich; Lee, "Lighthorse" Harry; Lee, Robert Edward; Leo III, The Isaurian; Louverture, Toussaint; MacArthur, Arthur; MacArthur, Douglas; Mahan, Alfred Thayer; Marshall, George Catlett; Martel, Charles; Maurice of Nassau; Mehmed II, The Conqueror; Montgomery, Bernard Law; Musashi, Miyamoto; Napoleon I; Nelson, Horatio; Ney, Michel; Nimitz, Chester William; Nobunaga, Oda; Otto The Great; Patton, George S., Jr.; Pershing, John Joseph; Petain, Henri Philippe; Peter the Great; Philip II; Piao, Lin; Pizzarro, Francisco; Pompey The Great; Puller, Lewis B. (Chesty); Richard I (the Lion-Hearted); Roberts, Frederick Sleigh; Rommel, Erwin; Saladin; Schwarzkopg, H. Norman; Scipio Africanus; Scipio, Publius Cornelius; Scott, Winfield; Sebastien Le Prestre de Vauban; Selim I; Shaka Zulu; Sherman, William T.; Smith, Oliver P.; Stephen The Great; Student, Kurt; Suleiman I; Suleyman I, The Magnificent; Surov, Alexander Vasilevich; Suvorov, Aleksander; Tamerlane; Themistocles; Thomas Cochrane; Timur; Tito; Togo, Heihachiro; Torstensson, Lennart; Tzu, Sun; von Blucher, Gebhard Leberecht; von Clausewitz, Karl; von Hindenburg, Paul; von Mannerheim, Carl Gustav Emil; von Moltke, Helmuth Karl Bernhard; von Tilly, Johann Tserclaes; von Tromp, Maarten; von Wallenstein, Albrecht; Walker, Walton H.; Wallace, William; Washington, George; Wellesley, Arthur (First Duke of Wellington); William the Conqueror; Wolfe, James; Wolseley, Garnet Joseph; Xenophon; Yamamoto, Isoroku; Zedong, Mao; Zhukov, Georgi Konstantinovich; Ziyad, Tariq Ibn; and, Zizka, Jan.

The only thing wrong with the list is it omits names, like Leonidas I. We can't include any heroes from the Trojan War, because it could just be a Myth. There isn't any doubt about Leonidas and the 300 Spartans at Thermopylae. But then, whoever made the list left off Darius and Xerxes. In the August of 480BC an army of some 7000 Greeks, led by the 300 Spartans of the royal guard, stood to receive the full force of the Persian army, numbering perhaps some sixty times its size. The Greek army included according to Herodotus 300 Spartans and 1000 other Laconians, 500 from Matinea, 500 from Tegea, 120 from Arcadian Orchomenos, 1000 other Arcadians, 400 Corinthians, 200 from Floria, 80 Mycenaeans, 700 Thespians, 400 Thebans and the whole Phocian and Opuntan Locrian army of 1,000 hoplites. Molon Labe! I haven't heard that in a while.

*Oh foreigner, give a message to the Lacedaemonians  
that here lie we, their words obeying.*

o

If you get the idea that by talking about military heroes and great leaders, I'm leading up

to something, you've read too many of these stories. Or, maybe not, México invaded on March 23, 2025. We, obviously, blinked.

"Still want to go to Texas, Gunny?"

"What that Greek said."

"*Μολών λαβέ* – Come and take them?"

"Right, they can come and get us."

"You don't think they'll just steamroll over us?"

"Wouldn't mind having a couple of tanks."

"They come in sets of 4 at ~\$4 million each. Do you have \$16 million lying around?"

"Let me check my wallet."

"Yeah, right."

"Nope I'm a little short. Tell you what I can afford, TOW missiles."

"Remember that funeral we went to in August? I think we lost our source."

"Remember me buying ammo? Tom wasn't the only person with sources!"

"Oh, right, tell Barstow we need a couple of dozen TOW missiles and they should fast forward them."

"We don't have that much money; you'll have to kick in if you want 2 dozen."

"How much you figure?"

"Cost the government what, \$180,000? Well, figure \$60,000 each, I might get a discount. Don't do the math; it comes to \$1.5 million in round numbers. We can use the tripod launcher."

In case you haven't done the math, that's 100 pounds of gold, 1,200 gold Eagles. June and I had more gold than that and if you considered the alternative...

"I'm in."

"I thought we might run it through the corporation, and that way it would be divided up among everyone. You and I can front it and they can pay us back."

"I'll have to ask June, it's her money."

"I was planning on telling Marilyn and it's her money too."

"She'll snatch your head bald!"

"I'm already bald, it won't hurt much. Ask or tell, it will all come down to the same thing, Dan, we buy the TOWs or our turkey will end up well done."

"Do you mean our goose will be cooked?"

"I hate goose, too greasy, and duck ain't much better. Yeah."

"I'll ask."

◦

"What did she say?"

"Before or after she said I was crazy? She said yes. How many tripods are you going to get?"

"Maybe 4, that will give us 6 loads per tripod."

"If you can do it, get 5 tripods and 30 missiles. June said I could spend up to \$1 million."

◦

"Well?"

"He's delivering them personally and bringing his wife, he said it was time to retire from Civil Service."

"How many did you get?"

"For \$2 million I got 40 and 5 tripods. Plus they're going to move into Tom and Elle's home, it's empty anyway."

"What is this guy?"

"GS-12. Or, do you mean in the Corps? Same as me, Sergeant Major, E-9."

"Logistics?"

"Infantry."

"Is he well equipped?"

"Never looked."

"Weapons, Gunny!"

"Oh, he likes M14s. And, I mean, he really likes M14s. I don't really know, but off-hand guess, he probably has several and M1911s to match. I'm sure a few cases of some kind of 7.62x51mm ammo and some .45ACP that fell off the truck. Either a shipment came in long and he got the extra or a shipment came in short but the shipping invoice said it wasn't."

"Are all supply Sergeants the same?"

"No, unfortunately, there are a few honest ones."

"So the TOWs cost us what?"

"\$50,000 each and one house. He threw in the launchers and they aren't exactly cheap. The TOW 2 weapon system is composed of a reusable launcher, a missile guidance set, and sight system. The system is tripod mounted. The missiles we got are the BGM-71G TOW F&F."

"Does the Corp have a lot of launchers?"

"About 1,495, now. We have to meet the train in 3 days. He said he'd be here sooner if he could find a way."

"Like what?"

"Maybe a Hercules, C130J, into Lakin Airport. His boy is a Marine pilot."

"What about his crew?"

"They're all single. His copilot is female."

"They have something going?"

"They might, unofficially."

"How are they going to pull that off?"

"Engine trouble? Radio trouble?"

"Right a Marine deserting his post in a war."

"War hasn't been declared, yet. But if it is before they land, I'm sure he won't. And, if it is, his father will probably have to sit on him to keep him here."

"Would he do that?"

"I doubt it; he's a 30-year man."

◦

"I just got a call, he's flying in."

"What about his son?"

"They will be departing for Dallas Fort Worth, reassigned to the NAS JRB Fort Worth."

"Carswell?"

"At one time, that's what they called it. The base, under the oversight of the Commander Naval Air Reserve Forces, now hosts a variety of fighter/attack and airlift units from the reserve components of Navy, Marine Corps and Air Force. Airfield operating procedures and equipment (e.g., PAR and ILS) reflect a combination of service requirements, although as the operators of the local ATC system, DON imposes Navy procedures as the operations standard. BRAC 2005."

◦

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and GlaxoSmithKline have warned healthcare professionals regarding the potential increased risk for suicidal behavior associated with use of paroxetine HCl tablets/oral solution (Paxil) or paroxetine extended-release tablets (Paxil CR). Careful monitoring of all patients regardless of the condition being treated is needed, they say.

◦

Something bad had to be brewing, they showed *Megiddo: The Omega Code 2* on TV, again. We were waiting at the Lakin airport with a semi when the C-130J-30 landed.

"Top, good to see you."

"Gunny. You know Cynthia. Give them a few minutes to unload the pallets. Is there a forklift here? Never mind, they found it."

"What did you bring?"

"As far as our personal goods go, not a lot. My guns and ammo, our clothes and a few boxes of memorabilia. I was checking the shipment on the way here, someone screwed

up; they loaded 6 tripods and 48 missiles, no extra charge, someone else is going to have to account for them."

"Aren't they going to shut down the engines?"

"They can't stay; things are heating up in Texas and they're overdue at Ft. Worth."

"This is Dan Robbins, he's a retired CSM."

"Dan, I'm Sergeant Major David Haynes, USMC, retired. My friends call me Top. This frilly little thing is my wife Cynthia."

"Top, Cynthia, Command Sergeant Major Daniel C. Robbins, US Army, retired, pleased to meet you. My wife June is back at the farm fixing something for lunch."

"I'm going to say goodbye to my son and we'll be right with you."

It only took them a few minutes to unload the cargo. It seemed like a lot of pallets for what Top described they had with them. They began to restart the outboard engines on the Hercules and the moment Top cleared the ramp, it was being folded up into the tail of the plane. In a couple of minutes the plane was gone.

"This is going to be a bad one, we'll be lucky to get out of it alive," Top said. "Who did you con out of the HMMWVs?"

"We bought those at a government auction and had them rebuilt and upgraded to the 2006 specifications, but kept them diesel. The weapons came from the Army, my friend Tom had a few contacts in supply and we managed a pair of Mk-19's, several Ma Deuces and M240s. Tom and his wife Elle were killed last August."

"Sorry. Car accident?"

"Murdered while on patrol."

o

We returned to the farm and Hank and Marilyn were there and introductions were made all around. Cynthia, 'call me Cindy', was anxious to see their new home and lunch was a hurried affair. Marilyn and June had apparently cleaned out Tom and Elle's personal things from the house and someone had restocked everything. The girls started putting things away and we took Top on a tour of the farm. He was generally impressed with our state of preparations, but pointed out that the fence wouldn't stop a determined opponent.

"It never was intended to do more than slow them down, Top. We have some standoff weapons in the mortars, Mk 19s and Ma Deuces, and these TOW missiles you brought



us give us half a chance against armor. I couldn't help but notice that you seemed to have more pallets of goods than one might have expected."

"Ammo, mostly; I've seen collecting it for some time. I asked Gunny what you had for weapons and added some extra. One pallet is M14 rifles and M1911s plus spare magazines. There is 7.62mm, 5.56mm, .45ACP, 9mm, and belted ammo for your machineguns in all 4 calibers, 40mm, .50 caliber, 7.62mm and 5.56mm. There are some new barrels for the Ma Deuces and other spare parts. I also added some things you didn't have that will make protecting the farm a little easier."

"Really? What?"

"Land mines. They were supposed to go to Hawthorne to be dismantled but there was nothing wrong with them and I diverted a few. There aren't enough Claymores to protect your entire perimeter, but there are a few of those. There are 2 pallets of Bouncing Betties. I wouldn't deploy those just yet; they're a bitch to disarm. Mind my asking where you find diesel fuel?"

"We make it; we grow about 500 acres of soybeans for the oil and meal."

"How big is the farm?"

"1,920 acres."

"What else do you grow?"

"Corn, hay, and 120 acres of gardens. Our electricity is provided by that big wind turbine, it has a 2mw capacity. Plus there are several layers of redundancy. There are 3 underground shelters plus one aboveground shelter."

"Place looks like a military base, where's the gedunk?"

"Huh?"

"We'll stop by my house and have a taste, Top," Gunny laughed. "A gedunk is a canteen on a large ship or naval installation, Dan."

o

I was going to object when Dan and Gunny presented the Corporation with a bill for \$2 million for additional arms until I found out what we got for the money. 48 TOW missiles cost the military about \$8.6 million alone, not counting the 6 tripods. Top explained how over a period of years things came up short in shipments, but strangely, never over. He had a private storage bin in Barstow practically crammed to the roof with things he'd gathered. He explained that when a friend would call him up and want something you could only get from the military, he could draw on his 'personal' inventory. More than

once they'd shipped something out of Barstow that never made it to the destination and he'd had to explain away what someone down the line had 'cumshawed'.

Around 1925, cumshaw became a navy term for a tip or gift used to obtain illegal imports and exports by unofficial or devious means. In the military, cumshaw is still a slang term for materials that are misappropriated. A "cumshaw artist" is a person who is adept at getting unauthorized projects done by bartering surplus items to obtain services or goods in short supply. (Tony Curtis in *Operation Petticoat*; Jim Hutton in *The Green Berets*; and, Don Rickles in *Kelly's Heroes*.)

I was satisfied that we got our money's worth, about \$10 million worth of government only goods for \$2 million. It might be wrong to do this, but I didn't much care for the government and its employees anyway. I guess revenge can take many forms. Besides, if the Mexican Army made it to Kansas, it probably meant the government wasn't doing its job of providing for the common defense. The M14 rifles, M1911s and the M16 mines weren't in general use by the military and some of the ammo was 10-15 years old. The TOW missiles were the latest design but had been manufactured before the war. Why not, we'll just make some extra alcohol and age it. Man, if the ATF showed up now, we'd be up the creek. What am I saying – if the ATF showed up now, we'd just plant them and see what they grew.

We had enough weapons we could even arm the horses, but that would require some sort of trigger adapter. Come to think of it, who in his right mind would name his horse Trigger and his dog Bullet? Word was he imbibed. The museum in Branson has along with their famous saddles: the mounted (not stuffed!) carcasses of Trigger, Buttermilk, and dog Bullet. Be my pal and when you die, I'll stuff you. [Closed; contents auctioned off.]

Reduced to fighting a conventional war against an enemy that was numerically superior, our whiz bang technical devices weren't any better than what the Chinese built for the Mexicans, probably using American technology. Just when we thought we'd fought them to a draw, the Venezuelan Navy showed up. Maybe Russia built the ships, but the Chinese equipped them and they were nearly equal to our Ticonderoga and Arleigh Burke classes. The only thing they lacked was carriers. When we brought in a CSG, a Kilo class submarine silently rose from the bottom and launched 6 torpedoes at the flattop. The Venezuelans had as many submarines as we had flattops and a one for one exchange wasn't exactly even. This forced the carriers to stand off to launch their planes.

The Kilos were capable of remaining submerged for up to ~96 hours. Then they'd approach the surface, extend their snorkels and refresh their air supply. By the time one of our ASW units could show up, they'd swapped out the air, moved and set down on the bottom in a new position. Their favorite place to hide was near our oil rigs in the Gulf; hence they didn't show up on our MAD detectors. There were approximately 3,000 oil platforms under US control in the Gulf of México, giving the Kilos plenty of places to hide.

The war wasn't moving very fast so we went ahead and planted crops and the gardens. Our TOWs were described as the man-portable crew of four, variety. They didn't mean we couldn't set the tripods up in the back of a pickup, anchor it in place and carry re-loads, so that's just exactly what we did. The downside was it tied up 6 pickups and the upside was that we could move the TOWs wherever they were needed in just a few minutes.

o

"How many Méxicans you have working here?"

"None, Top. We have 36 Tejano families from Texas working on the farm, though. They can trace their roots to Texas as far back as the Texas Revolution. We traveled Texas a few years back and picked up a tail. Turned out to be these Tejanos you see. They wanted us to help them prevent the Méxicans from crossing the Rio Grande into Big Bend National Park. After it was over, we offered them jobs. They showed up one day and have worked here ever since. About 2 years after that, we went to Texas again and freed a few towns the illegal immigrants had taken over."

"Many casualties?"

"A few. Not many killed; we have body armor. Let's face it; no kind of body armor will protect you from and IED or RPG."

"How big of a force can you field?"

"Maybe 100, maybe more. We lost Tom, Elle and Rachel but the youngsters are growing up. Hank and Gunny have done most of the training so our forces are more Marines than Army Infantry. Our Tejanos have G-3 rifles and we prefer the M1A. We have a fair number of the M16s for the women to use. My wife only weights about 108 pounds so while she can shoot the M1A, it's just too much for her to lug."

"What about these people who come from town to garden?"

"They're all armed. Over the years we've had an incursion or two and it's sort of a requirement that they be able to protect themselves. My two boys are Sheriff's Deputies and nearly every adult on the farm has a Reserve Deputy position. If the Sheriff called us all up, the farm would basically be unprotected. I figure it's better to fight there than here."

"So, who do you have watch the kids?"

## The Odyssey – Chapter 19

"That used to fall to Rachel, but since she died, I don't believe anyone else has been given the responsibility."

"Cindy could do it, she used to be a school teacher and is used to working with kids."

"Can she shoot?"

"No the weapon shoots, but she can pull a trigger. She has a G3A4 rifle."

"You prefer the M14?"

"Well, I did, but lately, I've taken to shooting the Mk17 SCAR-H."

"What's that?"

"The Special Operations Command Combat Assault Rifle, Heavy. It's built by FN here in the US. It will fire both 7.62x51mm and 7.62x39mm. The Light version fires the 5.56x45mm."

"So, what are our troops using these days?"

"Mostly the Mk 16 and Mk 17."

"What happened to the H&K XM-8?"

"You remember the stink how about the Army didn't use an open bidding process, right?"

"Yeah, sure do."

"That basically shelved the XM-8 and that 25mm heavy weapon. They've field a few M-25. Anyway, it came down to the H&K G-36 and the FN SCAR. FN won and that's what they've been shipping since the war."

"That tends to explain why some of the things we got weren't as hard to get as we thought they would be."

"Are you familiar with the Barrett rifles?"

"We have 2 Tac-50s, fully equipped."

"That's why he wanted the Mk 211, huh? I brought some, just in case."

"How much stuff was on that plane?"

"A full load, about 20 tons."

"That plane looked different."

"The C-130J is a modification of the C-130H, undertaken by Lockheed Martin at company expense, with intended sales to the United States and various foreign markets. The C-130J modification includes a two-crew member flight station, upgraded Allison AE 2100D3 engines, enhanced performance, and improved reliability and maintainability. The C-130J/J-30 integrated digital technology providing the capability to airdrop in instrument conditions without zone markers, as a baseline feature of the aircraft. When the high resolution ground mapping capability of the APN-241 Low Power Color Radar is coupled with the dual INS/GPS and digital mapping systems, the C-130J/J-30 provides single-ship or formation all weather aerial delivery. This means the entire J/J-30 fleet will be all weather airdrop capable. C-130Js will be delivered as weather (WC), electronic combat (EC), and tanker (KC) configured aircraft.

"The standard C-130J has essentially the same dimensions as the C-130E/H but the J-30 (stretched version) is 15 feet longer. The J-30 incorporates two extension plugs, one forward and one aft. The forward plug is 100 inches long while the rear plug is 80 inches for a total of 180 inches or 15 feet. With its 3,000 nautical mile range, increased speed, and air refueling capability, it complements the C-5/C-17 airlift team. The J-30 can work in the strategic, as well as tactical or intratheater, environment. The J-30 can be an effective force multiplier in executing the US Army Strategic Brigade Airdrop (SBA). The J-30 can airdrop 100% of the SBA requirement. No longer is it necessary to expend scarce heavy lift resources on strategic contingency requirements. Whether it's a channel, special airlift, training, or contingency airdrop mission, the J-30 can handle it all at a significantly reduced cost."

"How big are those pallets?"

"88" wide and 108" long with a maximum cargo capacity of 10,000 pounds. The maximum capacity of the C-130J-30 is 7 pallets. Say, are you going to be able to harvest the crops you planted?"

"That depends on how well our military does against México and that other county."

"Venezuela."

"Chávez?"

"He died of cancer. His successor has been swapping oil with the Russians and Chinese for military equipment, mainly Naval."

"I head they sunk one of our carriers."

"The Eisenhower, CVN-69. Hit her with 6 of the 533mm torpedoes."

"Ouch."

"Went down faster than the Oriskany."

"All hands?"

"No, they sounded the alarm and many of them got off."

"They must have had all the hatches closed."

"On larger ships, setting material condition ZEBRA in part or in total without all hands at general quarters will impede the ship's company from quickly manning battle stations. This situation could result in ZEBRA being set slower than had the ship been at material condition YOKE before the emergency. Large ships should therefore consider this when changing material condition. It was probably at YOKE. Those were likely fairly large holes. One or both of the A4W reactors may have scrambled cutting the power, I really wouldn't know."

"They won't sink anymore carriers no matter how hard they try, Top. It takes several years to replace a big one like the Ike. I'll bet good money it would cost \$10 billion to replace one these days."

"Do you think they will?"

"The Navy pushed on getting the Ford class launched and commissioned. They commissioned the Gerald R. Ford CVN78, John F. Kennedy CVN79 and the Enterprise CVN80. They won't be building anything else unless we win the war with México."

"If they make this far, we might get our butts kicked."

"If they make it this far, there won't be any Army or Marines alive and the Air Force will have been ineffective. I don't expect to see them, 179 Americans held Santa Anna up for two weeks and he had 5,000 men with cannons. Besides, it's over 700 miles to the Mexican border a lot could happen between there and here."

o

"Gunny, are we going to go help the Army?"

"I might go help the Marines, but the Army can take care of itself."

"That's not quite what I meant. We're civilians now and don't have to follow any rules. That might prove to be an advantage to our forces if we went back down to Texas and did our own thing."

"What do you have a death wish?"

"Irregulars don't have to pay by any rules and we have all the equipment the military has. The Méxicans will probably think they're up against some Special Forces unit and we can buy a small ranch as a cover."

"Where are they now?"

"Maybe 100 miles across our border."

"Who'd you have in mind to go?"

"You, me, Hank and Top, plus our Tejanos."

"Take the HMMWVs?"

"Hell no, the pickups, we don't want to look like militia. I checked what Top brought; we have explosives, detonators, and our choice of weapons. I take my USP Tactical, M1A and the Tac-50. I figured you do the same. Top's got some new 7.62 the military is using and a .45. It's got some new kind of detachable grenade launcher."

"SCAR, Heavy with the Mk13?"

"That's it."

"The Tejanos have .45s and G-3s, we won't need a lot of calibers of ammo."

"We'd better take a couple M240s, just in case."

"And we'll take the horses, set up for cavalry type riding."

"When?"

"Just as soon as you get Top convinced."

"One more question, why?"

"Only the dead have seen the end of war."

"So are we taking the wives?"

"Not this time."

"Why do I have the feeling we won't be coming back?"

"We might not, but we're not dead until our hearts stop beating."

◦

"You want to go where and do what?"

"Texas and help defend the Country."

"Fine," June said in a voice as cold as ice, "Take all of your personal possessions with you Dan Robbins and don't plan on coming back, even if you do survive."

I started to try and explain when the phone rang. It was Gunny and he had some more good news.

"Top laughed at me, Dan. He said the war would get here soon enough we didn't have to go looking for it."

"What did Marilyn say when you told her you were going?"

"Her exact words were, *Been nice knowing you Deke*. Sorry Dan, I'm not going and neither is Top."

That settled that, although I ended up sleeping in a guest bedroom for over a week.

◦

I had no idea when Randy and I started this preparation business it would turn into what it had. That was over 20 years ago, a lifetime back. Our second husbands were career soldiers who didn't seem to realize their careers were over. It was one adventure after another with these men. Marilyn and I had been talking and we'd had enough. I told her I thought the American experiment was changing, if not coming to an end. A submarine belonging to either México or Venezuela had sunk one of our super carriers. The spread of torpedoes had stitched a row of holes from the bow to the stern and the carrier didn't have a chance. A Destroyer got the sub, but who cared?

What had the Captain of the Dallas said in *The Hunt for Red October? Central Intelligence Agency... Now, there's a contradiction in terms*. If we knew México was building up for another war, why didn't we know what they had for equipment or better yet, what Venezuela had? It was like the old AA saying, *Half measures availed us nothing*. We could have nuked México City and put an end to it, but the government in its infinite wisdom used tactical nukes and only directly on the Mexican forces across our border.

California had contained the Lassa fever and the CDC supplied vaccine in time to halt the epidemic, but only after tens of thousands had died. After the war, they never rebuilt all of the factories that were destroyed. They started to rebuild some but then Yellowstone erupted, diverting resources. Our grocery stores began to look like the stores



must look in 3rd world countries, big, but most of the shelves bare. Medical supplies had become very difficult to find and if you could, they were impossibly expensive.

Kansas farmers had risen to the need, although Yellowstone put many of them out of business for good. Almost none of the canned goods in the grocery stores were registered with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture anymore. Most of those were in canning jars that I had acquired early on until the supply dried up. We even had to resort to buying back whiskey bottles for 25¢ each. Ironically, everyone knew who made the bourbon by now and nobody cared, except the ATF and the Kansas Department of Revenue.

When Dan came to me with this latest scheme of his, I'd had enough. It was one thing to defend the home place, but a different matter to go on another adventure looking for trouble. I let him have it with both barrels and from the phone call; Marilyn must have done the same to Gunny. Didn't the deaths of Tom and Elle prove we didn't need to look for trouble? It seemed to have a way of finding us. There seemed to be no purpose for their murder, either. Maybe whoever killed them realized what they were up against when the Mk 19 started firing.

o

I didn't take being overruled badly, but June was really upset by the proposal that we go to Texas and fight. I believe in my heart she got together with Marilyn and they staged a coup of sorts. At our age, Gunny and I couldn't afford to start over, and when he caved in, I gave up. It didn't seem to matter to her, she was angry and I spent a week in a spare bedroom. When I was contrite enough, she let me come back to bed.

The news on the TV wasn't good; inch by inch, the Mexican Army was seizing control of their former territories. One commentator speculated they were using an old map and wouldn't stop until they'd reclaimed every square inch of Spanish soil. The DOD released satellite photos to the media showing Russian Topol M missiles on mobile launch stands. The media also was granted tours of Cheyenne Mountain and given access to our missile silos so they could verify we were ready to respond, if Russia launched.

"Five miles ain't nuttin'," Gunny said. "I think we'd better get ready to enforce that line."

"I figured they'd make more of a stand, but the Army keeps falling back."

"If you don't want the Army camped on this farm, it's going to take some enforcing."

"We're going to get overrun by refugees, Gunny."

"Marilyn says these are our 3 square miles and nobody who doesn't get invited is welcome."

Eight miles of boundary doesn't sound like much until you have to defend it. Both Lakin and Garden City were north of the dry river bed, but it helped define their boundaries, especially Garden City. At the very least, the 5 miles of land between the Arkansas River and the MPR Ranch would be overrun with military. When they saw our military hardware, they might make assumptions that we couldn't live with. We could prove we owned the HMMWVs, but not much of the rest of the military equipment. We'd bought it, but those were bribes, not actual payment.

◦

Since its inception, the Naval War College has benefited from the contributions of officers from other services assigned to Newport as faculty members and students. In 1886, our second class at the College included two Marine Corps officers among the twenty-one students; and over the years, the Corps has sent many of its finest leaders to learn and to teach about naval warfare. We are much the better because of them.

The Naval War College Review is the scholarly professional journal of all three sea services, so it is appropriate that this issue's cover features Charles Waterhouse's painting of a Marine on the black sand beach of Iwo Jima, and that several of its articles address Marine Corps topics. The Marines have been our brothers-in-arms since the birth of our services more than two centuries ago.

I come from a big family that included one brother a year older than I and another a year younger. I know what brothers are like – and I've got the scars to prove it. But even though we spent a lot of energy trying to beat the tar out of each other, we always stood together against the kids up the block or any other outsiders. That's a pretty good description of how the brotherhood of the Navy and the Marine Corps operates too.

Let me recount an incident with one of my "brother officers" just after I had been selected for flag rank but while I was still a captain. I had to go to the FBI Academy at Quantico, Virginia, to hear a lecture, and I was late when I drove onto the Marine Corps base that surrounds Quantico. Passing the rifle range, I got stuck behind a car poking along at twenty-five miles per hour even though the speed limit signs authorized thirty-five miles per hour. At the first stretch of dashed road-stripes, I accelerated and passed that car.

As soon as I pulled back into the right lane, this driver went nuts! He immediately hit me with his high-beam headlights, began honking his horn, and tailgated me all the way through the gate at the FBI Academy. When I parked, his car whipped in next to me, and a very agitated Marine major jumped out, introduced himself, and got right up in my face, chewing me out for speeding.

I tried to point out that I had obeyed the posted signs, but he was hearing none of that. What particularly galled him was that I had directly disobeyed the commanding general's written order that forbade driving faster than twenty-five miles per hour in the area of the rifle range. He was neither amused nor appeased by my remark that I had not

spotted the lance corporal handing out copies of the general's instruction when I got off the I-95 exit ramp. Indeed, as you might imagine, the conversation quickly went downhill into an argument about my lack of leadership and his lack of a brain. We parted no closer to agreement than when we began.

Later (and calmer), I reflected on this incident. It occurred to me that my brother officer's actions might be understandable if I saw them from his background, which expects everyone to know and obey orders, rules, and instructions – with no exceptions or excuses. While I might disagree about whether my driving had broken any rule, I had to admire the major's tenacity and insistence on high standards by someone he thought had exceeded the speed limit by ten miles per hour.

I like the fact that Marines set high standards for themselves and those around them, and that they consider nothing less as acceptable. I see this on base, where Marines insist on proper salutes and happily provide lessons if a subordinate needs them, and where Marines always have properly fitted uniforms that they wear with great pride.

I like the way Marines march. Sailors don't march very well, but Marines do – always – because of how they are trained. When Marines complete basic training at Quantico, Parris Island, or San Diego, they can march, they can shoot, and they have a pride in themselves and the Corps that is unsurpassed anywhere in the world. The Marine Corps does this by concentrating on what is important: discipline, drill, knowledge of the service rifle, and understanding the history and tradition of the Corps.

George Will once wrote that Marines "cultivate an ethos conducive to producing hard people in a soft age." I like the sound of that phrasing, and it's true. Marines stay in shape. They work hard at physical readiness, and if there are one or two Marines who are overweight, they have been well hidden.

Marines are also tough organizationally. They have only one boss, the Commandant, so they speak with one voice: what the Commandant says goes. Before meeting with any outsiders, the Marines always get together, decide what their position is going to be, and never break ranks in the bureaucratic battle. Some people might portray this as intellectual rigidity, but I can attest to its effectiveness.

Equally, the Marines are direct to the verge of bluntness. When the Commandant put out his Planning Guidance, he didn't ignore or talk around problems, he didn't put off tough decisions, and he didn't say "Let's study it some more." He said he was tired of studies, so where he could he gave the answer as to what should be done. He also named who was responsible and stipulated the date for that person to report back on how the job would be done. I like that.

The Commandant also can count on the fact that Marines obey orders. They don't whine, or ask why, or do a little "Mother may I?" dance: give a Marine a job to do, and he goes out and does it. And they are stubborn – whether in combat, where, once committed, they fight forever, or in Pentagon budget battles, where they just make it feel

like forever to all the rest of us. But it works! The V-22 Osprey program has had a stake driven through its heart more times than Bela Lugosi, yet it's rising out of the coffin.

The Marine Corps also makes the most of the press. They knew a long time ago that the press could be enormously useful in bringing their story to the American public, and that the enlisted troops are any service's greatest public relations asset. So the Marines put their people out front with all the media, where the reporters and camera crews can see them in action and it pays off.

In short, I admire the professionalism of the Marine Corps. It is more than working hard and doing your job well – all of the services do that. Rather, being a Marine is a way of life. It's a commitment to being the best, to dedicating yourself to the Corps and its ideals. That's why there aren't any ex-Marines, and why *First to Fight* isn't a motto but a sacred pledge.

Whether afloat or ashore, on famous battlefields or unnamed skirmish grounds, in heat or cold, Marines have distinguished themselves by their bravery, tenacity, love of Country, and loyalty to one another.

Here at the Naval War College, Marines have made their mark in setting high standards and fighting for the truth as they have seen it. They have been our brothers in the quest for intellectual excellence for more than a hundred years, and I am pleased to see their contributions acknowledged in this, their scholarly journal, as well.

J.R. Stark  
Rear Admiral, US Navy  
President, Naval War College

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Right after Korea in 1953 the 1st Amphibious Reconnaissance Company, FMFPAC can be credited with the birth of "OORAH" in the Corps.

Specifically, where it came from was when Recon Marines were aboard the Submarine USS PERCH, ASSP-313. The Perch was an old WWII diesel boat retrofitted to carry UDT and Amphib Recon Marines. If you remember the old war movies, whenever the boat was to dive, you heard on the PA system, "DIVE, DIVE", and you heard the horn sound "AARUGHA", like an old Model "A" horn.

Sometime in 1953 or 1954, 1st Amphib Recon Marines, while on a conditioning run on land singing chants, someone imitated the "Dive" horn sound "AARUGHA", and it naturally became a Recon Warrior chant or mantra while on runs. It is sort of like the martial arts yell and adds a positive inference to the action. And this became part of Recon lexicon.

Former SgtMaj of the Marine Corps, John Massaro, was the company Gunny of 1st

Force in the late 50s and when he transferred to MCRDSD as an instructor at DI school he took "AARUGHA" with him and passed it on to the DI students and they, in turn, passed it on to recruits.

Just as "Gung Ho" became symbolic of the WWII Raiders, so did "AARUGHA" become part of the new "running Marine Corps."

Over time, "AARUGHA" eventually changed to "OORAH". The official Marine Corps Training Reference Manual on the history of Marine Recon is titled "AARUGHA", giving credence on the origination of the 'Positive Response' accenting anything that is meant to be good and uniquely Marine Corps.

It is part of Marine Corps language, like "Pogey Bait", "SOS", etc.

Semper Fi & Gung Ho,

Sgt. Wolf

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"Gunny, I didn't say Marines were afraid to fight, I just asked why you didn't want to go to Texas. I know all about the battles you fought in WW II, Khe Sanh and Hué. I know about the nearly 1,000 Marines who died in Iraq. And I know that you've been a lean mean fighting machine since 1775."

"But did you know that the E-8 and E-9 levels each have two rates per pay grade, each with different responsibilities? Gunnery Sergeants (E-7) indicate on their annual evaluations, called "fitness reports", or "fitreps" for short, their preferred promotional track: Master Sergeant or First Sergeant. The First Sergeant and Sergeant Major ranks are command-oriented, with Marines of these ranks serving as the senior enlisted Marines in a unit, charged to assist the commanding officer in matter of discipline, administration and the morale and welfare of the unit. Master Sergeants and Master Gunnery Sergeants provide technical leadership as occupational specialists in their specific MOS. First Sergeants typically serve as the senior enlisted Marine in a company, battery or other unit at similar echelon, while Sergeants Major serve the same role in battalions, squadrons or larger units."

## The Odyssey – Chapter 20

"Did you know that some enlisted ranks have commonly used nicknames, though they are not official and technically improper? For instance, a Master Sergeant is commonly called 'Top' and a Master Gunnery Sergeant is 'Master Guns'. A First Sergeant is never referred to as 'Top,' but as a '1st shirt'. A Gunnery Sergeant is typically called 'Gunny,' and (much less often) 'Guns'. Likewise, Lance Corporals are often referred to (derisively) as 'Lance Coolies,' 'Lances,' 'Lance Coconuts,' or 'Lance Criminals.' They are not usually called by rank due to their status as 'non-rates'."

"Then why does David go by Top?"

"It's easier to say than Sergeant Major and he was a Master Sergeant for a lot longer than a he was a Sergeant Major."

"Ok, why do you go by Gunny instead of Master Guns?"

"Why not?"

"I guess it's as big of a mouthful as Command Sergeant Major, isn't it?"

"Yeah, it doesn't really mean crap anyway, the only one who isn't an E-9 is Hank and he was only one step down. If he'd stuck around a few more years, he'd have made E-9 too."

"I sure never made E-8 in my first 20. He's about our age, why only 20 years of service?"

"He went to college and got a Master's degree before he enlisted. The offered him OCS but he wasn't interest in becoming an officer; damned good Master Sergeant though."

"The thing that concerns me is what we do if the Army or Marines show up on our front door."

"We can prove we own the HMMWVs and there aren't too many officers who would dispute the word of a retired E-9 from any branch of service. They aren't all like that Major of Gunny Highway's. We'll lie to them and if they see the TOWs, tell them a National Guard unit gave them to us."

"What if we formed a Militia unit?"

"Does Kansas have a State Defense Force?"

"They do now, got one after the war."

"Where do we sign up?"

"It's not that simple, Gunny."

"Can we get their insignia?"

"I can arrange that, all on my own."

"We'll form 2 platoons with Top and you as Platoon Commanders and Hank and I can be the Platoon Sergeant."

"Hank and I will be the Platoon Sergeants and Top and you can be the Lieutenants."

"They're going to be very strange looking Platoons, Dan. I'll talk to David about it."

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It turns out we actually did become Platoons in the Kansas Defense Force, Seventh Infantry Battalion, Company B (Mechanized), 1st and 2nd Platoons. Top and Gunny were made 1st Lieutenants, and Hank and I Master Sergeants. And we provided all of our own equipment, it was superior to theirs. The 3rd and 4th Platoons were made up of volunteers from Lakin and Deerfield. Everyone age 18 and up was enlisted into one of the Platoons and each Platoon had one Medic, Gunny and I had June and Top and Hank had Jim. We choose not to wear rank insignia, everyone knew everyone anyway. Company A was from Finney County and Company C, Hamilton County.

As Company B of the Seventh Battalion we were responsible for the Kearny County first, the Southwestern District of Kansas, second, and the whole state, third. We served at the pleasure of the Governor and his Adjutant. Contrary to popular opinion, there is one instance where an officer salutes an enlisted man first. How closely did you watch *Heartbreak Ridge*? And why did the Colonel Meyers always seem to get his hand in motion first? They're pretty hard to come by and none of us had one. Five white stars on a sky blue field. It is bestowed *for conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of life, above and beyond the call of duty, in actual combat against an armed enemy force.*

*Not all the darkness of the land, can hide the lifted eye and hand; Nor need the clanging conflict cease, to make Thee hear our cries for peace.* – Henry Timrod

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For the first time since the Mexican American War, American soldiers were fighting foreign troops on American soil. Historically, US wars include: Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Mexican American War, Civil War, Spanish American War, WW I, WW II, Korean War, Vietnam War, Desert Storm, Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, WW III and this war, the 2nd Mexican American War, a continuation of the war Mexico started and we thought we had finished. If fault is to be assigned to our possible defeat, it lay at the feet of the people who decided to limit our use of nukes, because now, we couldn't use them

for fear of starting an all-out, world-wide, nuclear confrontation; or, so said the Democrat in the White House. Grenada, Panama and Somalia are excluded as being operations rather than wars.

One couldn't fault the Corps, it was the second smallest branch of service and only the Coast Guard was smaller. As of 2025, they had 180,000 active and 40,000 reserve Marines. Since the founding of the United States of America, there has been a special operation's unit. First, there were Rodger's Rangers who fought with the British during the Colonial period. Next was Mosby's Rangers who fought for the South during the Civil War. More than 50 years ago, the United States activated the Office of Strategic Services, which consisted of three of the military branches (Navy, Army, and Army Air Force) to help defend the Country.

America's newest weapon will activate and give terrorists more reasons to fear as the United States Marine Corps establishes Marine Forces Special Operations Command (MARSOC) and joins the celebrated ranks of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM).

USSOCOM's mission is to plan, direct and execute special operations in the conduct of the War on Terrorism in order to disrupt, defeat, and destroy terrorist networks that threaten the United States, its citizens and interests worldwide.

It also organizes, trains and equips Special Operation Forces (SOF) provided to geographic combatant commanders, American ambassadors and their Country teams.

Since USSOCOM's creation in 1987, the Marine Corps has been an outside factor in helping it accomplish these missions.

Now having their own Special Forces component, Marines will directly support current SOF missions and begin new missions with different purposes.

The key tasks of MARSOC will be: direct action, special reconnaissance, foreign internal defense, counterterrorism, information operations, and unconventional warfare.

According to the mission statement, MARSOC will train and provide a fully capable Marine Special Operation Force to USSOCOM for worldwide deployments to execute assigned missions. The MARSOC units will be capable of task organizing as scalable, tailorable and responsive special operations units from sea based platforms as well as from United States locations.

MARSOC Headquarters will be located at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune, N.C., and consist of five subordinate elements:

The Foreign Military Training Unit (FMTU) will provide tailored military combat-skills training and advisor support for identified foreign forces as well as Marines and sailors and will assist friendly host-nation forces, including naval and maritime military and par-



armilitary forces, to enable them to support their governments' internal security and stability, counter subversion, and reduce the risk of violence from internal and external threats.

The Marine Special Operations Support Group (MSOG) will provide combined arms planning and coordination, K-9 support, special operations communications support, combat service support including logistics, and all-source intelligence fusion capability.

Two Marine Special Operations Battalions (MSOB), one on each coast, will be organized, trained, and equipped to deploy for worldwide missions as directed by MARSOC. Each MSOB will consist of several Marine Special Operations Companies and be task-organized with personnel uniquely skilled in special equipment support, intelligence and fire-support.

As a major command, MARSOC will report directly to the Commandant of the Marine Corps for service matters and will be under the operational control of USSOCOM.

Elements of different units, including 4th Marine Expeditionary Brigade (Anti-Terrorism), will transition into needed areas of MARSOC to give it a stronger foundation in its early years.

The leathernecks at MARSOC will continue the traditions of the *The Few, The Proud* and *America's 911 force*, while interlocking into USSOCOM's new paradigm of *Right Force, Right Place, Right Time, Right Adversary*, to help defeat the enemy anywhere, anytime. "OORAH".

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Maybe I should point out that Marines have another distinction, The First to Die. The term *The American Rifleman* undoubtedly belongs to the US Marine Corps. According to Top, after the SCAR-H was issued to SOCOM, it next went to the Corps. Back in the Vietnam era the USAF was the first branch of service to adopt the M16, thanks to Curtis E. LeMay. IMHO, the Marines should have kept the semi-auto M14.

"I'd like to see a more aggressive attitude on the part of the United States. That doesn't mean launching an immediate preventive war. ... Native analysts may look sadly back from the future on that period when we had the atomic bomb and the Russians didn't... That was the era when we might have destroyed Russia completely and not even skinned our elbows doing it.... China has the bomb... Sometime in the future – 25, 50, 75 years hence – what will the situation be like then? By that time the Chinese will have the capability of delivery too... That's the reason some schools of thinking don't rule out a destruction of the Chinese military potential before the situation grows worse than it is today. It's bad enough now."

It came true long before he envisioned it. "I used to receive a hundred calls a year from people who wanted me to get into the Green Room at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base,

because that's where the Air Force stored all the material gathered on UFOs. I once asked Curtis LeMay if I could get in that room, and he just gave me holy hell. He said, *Not only can't you get into it but don't you ever mention it to me again.*" If he was alive and we still had a Strategic Air Command, we wouldn't be sitting in Kansas worrying about the Mexican Army. General LeMay would have been flying the lead B-52. The Air Force had a few Warriors too. Frank Lovejoy did the best job of portraying him in the movies.

... [President Eisenhower] believed that over time the Soviet Union would mellow. It therefore made sense to negotiate with the Russians. Even so, American forces not only had to be strong enough to deter Soviet aggression in Europe, or anywhere else of vital interest to the US; if deterrence failed, the US had to be ready to destroy the Soviet Union.

He intended to do this not, after but before any attack on the United States could be launched. This was the most important single element in Eisenhower's Cold War strategy; he was not going to base American security on a strike from beyond the grave.

Eisenhower explicitly ruled out a preventive war, but not a preemptive strike. He began to create a strategic force capable of detecting any Soviet move toward a nuclear attack. Once detected, it might only be possible to tell the Soviets to back down or else, but if a warning was tried and failed, or if there was not enough time to warn the Kremlin, he was going to beat the enemy to the punch.

Any serious move toward launching a surprise attack would be interpreted as a *casus belli*. The bombs didn't have to explode first. As the most obvious and banal, it was the dramatic device of a thousand westerns – at the climax, all the bad guy has to do is reach for his gun to justify the good guy drawing quicker and shooting him dead.

"Our own chance of victory," Eisenhower told the NSC [National Security Council] on December 3, 1953, "would be a paralyze the enemy at the outset of the war... If war comes, the other fellow must have started it. Otherwise we would not be in a position to use the nuclear weapon and we have got to be in the position to use that weapon.

Two days later, he told Winston Churchill, "Anyone who holds up too long in the use of his assets in atomic weapons might suddenly find themselves subjected to such widespread and devastating attack that retaliation would be next to impossible," and when senior congressional figures protested that his strategy ignored the requirement for congress to declare war, he responded that if faced with "a gigantic Pearl Harbor, I will act to protect the United States."

In January 1954, [Secretary of State John Foster] Dulles gave a widely reported speech in which he spoke of America's "massive retaliatory power." Eisenhower was repeatedly pressed to explain what "massive retaliation" means, but he invariably took refuge in ambiguity, giving many people the impression that he hadn't thought clearly about how nuclear weapons would be used. In truth, he knew exactly what he had in mind. "When

we talk about power and massive retaliation," he told members of the NSC, "we mean retaliation against an act that to use means irrevocable war. On another occasion, he told his staff plainly, "SAC must not allow the enemy to strike the first blow."

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"No person in his/her right mind would advocate nuclear weapons. However, if the other guy has them, what choice does the President of the US have? By maintaining the largest deliverable stock of nuclear weapons – think Ohio – that are virtually impossible to destroy, the US has the ultimate Doomsday Weapon. I can only imagine that the Russians realize this or they wouldn't now be threatening to launch a retaliatory strike against the US if we nuke the Mexican Army."

"Yeah, right, Gunny. And I'm equally as sure that all 14 of our Boomers are on patrol and at the first sign that the Russians are preparing to launch, we'll launch all of our warheads. The planet will all but become inhabitable."

"Hmm, maybe we need more underground bunkers."

"Who was it said, 'Big fringing hole in the ground if you ask me'?"

"Those holes didn't have covers, Dan."

"We only have two culvert shelters, Randy's and Ray's. You thinking you should put in one?"

"Do you have the number for Utah Shelter systems?"

"(435) 657-2641." (Sharon Packer)

"Where are they?"

"Draper, Utah, south of Salt Lake City."

"I've got to call Ray."

"Ray, Gunny, what's the deal on the LUWA Systems?"

"Gunny, Prices for all above items include shipping to your nearest US international airport. Prices do not include installation. All orders require a 50% deposit. Delivery via airfreight from Switzerland is approximately 3 weeks. Allow time for items to clear customs before taking delivery. They inform you when your order is ready. If you require transport of your order from the airfreight company to your location, there will be an additional cost. Please inform them of this request before delivery time. All ANDAIR products are manufactured in Switzerland under the directives of the Swiss Federal Office of Civil Defense. All ventilation systems have both hand crank and AC electrical function.

Rated to 15-psi. All units can upgrade to 45 psi for an additional \$550. It includes: ventilator; crank handle; emergency light; cover; rubber hoses; chemical/biological gas filter; intake and exhaust blast valves. Local taxes have not been included."

"How did you manage to get one on short notice?"

"They had just gotten one in to install in a shelter but had time to get another before the shelter was done. It takes them 6 weeks to build a shelter. They usually have those horizontal blast doors in stock."

"Is the contractor done with yours?"

"Yes, do you need his number?"

"Yeah and I'll have to make a quick trip to Salt Lake City."

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Gunny went nuts, he told the contractor to install a 4 tube setup, each culvert was 10'x50' and two had nothing but bunks. One had a generator compartment, bathrooms and storage and the other kitchen and dining facilities. The contractor told him to figure on a quarter million before it was done, but that included the 4 air filtration systems, etc. I couldn't understand, the US had announced that they would not use nuclear weapons. When I challenged him on it, he said, "Not until they set one foot beyond the original line, we won't. After that, I'd be prepared for anything."

We were talking about ¼ of the US, for crying out loud. Why would the government react if they took a little extra, they were a bunch of liberal, commie lovers, if you ask me. I was surprised they hadn't invited the UN in long before this. They probably would have if Teddy and the Wicked Witch of the East were still alive. Kennedy eventually died of brain cancer. Somebody locked Hillary out of the shelter during Yellowstone. And, yes, Bill still wanted to be President.

Hank went with Gunny to Salt Lake. Top and I stayed home and watched the contractor installing the new quadruple shelter Gunny was having built. We were ready at a moment's notice, but it hadn't come yet. Top got the Sheriff to send his Deputies out and he ran a class on familiarizing them with the M14 rifle, and refresher on the M16/M203. Both Randy and Ray's shelters could sleep up to 10 people and 3 more if cots were used. Gunny's new shelter could sleep 36 in each of the two tubes with bunks and up to 9 more on cots or on the floor.  $2(13) + 2(45) = 116$  not counting Gunny and Marilyn's old shelter which had a capacity of 10. If the small children could double up in bunks, that would further increase our sleeping capacity.

Unlike Sharon Packer and Paul Seyfried, we didn't rely on chemical toilets. We had the advantage of large below ground water and fuel storage. Plus we weren't anywhere near a probable target. GCK, 7 miles southeast of Garden City was the nearest airport

with large runways. 36K, the Lakin Airport had a very rough 3,400'x40' asphalt runway and an even rougher 2,600'x90' turf runway. While GCK might be a target, 36K probably wouldn't be but even if it was, it was 3½ miles from our closest shelter.

Theoretically, the US could make a first strike on Russia, if and only if, 21 1.2mT nuclear weapons would be sufficient to eliminate the Russian C<sup>3</sup>I. Therein lay the gamble. 18 B-2 Spirit bombers could, again theoretically, each drop 1 B83 set at a yield of 1.2mT simultaneously. Each plane could carry 16 of those weapons and could strike other targets before we launched our 2,688 Trident warheads. That would include about 400 475kT W88 warheads and the remainder would be 100kT W76 warheads. Claims were made a long time ago that there were enough of the W88 warheads for 4 submarines, e.g., at least 768 and they began building the pits way before the war. Did they use them up in the war with China? Inquiring minds want answers. You had better plan on sheltering in place for a while, say 16,807 hours = 700 days. If 2 years wasn't long enough, the next interval in the 7/10 rule was 4,902 days = 13.42 years.

"If they go nuclear June, we may never see another sunshine. I figured it out and it would take 13.4 years for the radiation to drop to the next interval."

"Phooey, Dan. That would drop the radiation to 1 one millionth of the original dose. If that happened, one could assume a radiation level so high that... well it couldn't happen. On the other hand, what if they used cobalt or some other long half-life material? It could take 5,000 years. If 700 days doesn't cut it, I'm leaving anyway. I'd see my last sunshine and sunset and take a pill. All of us might just as well do the same thing."

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"How was Salt Lake?"

"Very salty?"

"Did you get what you wanted?"

"Money talks."

"I know, but did you get what you wanted?"

"Yep. How is the contractor coming on the shelters?"

"He's been working 24 hours a day, what did you promise him?"

"20 cases of bourbon and a bag of gold coins if it was done when I got home."

"Pretty free with the bourbon."

"We can make more."

"I talked to June about how long we'd have to shelter."

"What did she say?"

"That after 700 days she was leaving the shelter regardless of the circumstances to watch the sunrise, eat steak and lobster, have a drink, watch the sunset and then take a pill."

"Did you figure out what the nearest target was?"

"I think perhaps the Garden City Airport."

"What's there?"

"A long runway and jet fuel A."

"How far is that from here?"

"I don't know, but AirNav said it was 25.3 miles from Lakin Airport on a heading of 86°."

"So, that would be close to 30 miles from us?"

"They'd probably use a ground burst to destroy the runway, right?"

"So what?"

"Ground bursts produce more fallout, but the prevailing wind is from the west. They also produce less overpressure. I think it's safe to assume a maximum shelter time of 100 days."

"And then what?"

"We bury the dead livestock and start over. I picked up a new meter. It will read up to 10,000R/hr."

"What is it?"

"An AMP 200 High Range Area Monitor. It is GM Tube based with a range of 1 R/h to 10,000 R/h. It has a cable and a remote head. I figure we can mount it in any one of the shelters and when the level gets down to 500R, we can turn on the CD V-717s."

"I sure hope the Russians haven't built some kind of Doomsday device. There were books about those you know; *On the Beach* and *Down to a Sunless Sea*.

*In Xanadu did Kubla Khan*

*A stately pleasure-dome decree:  
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea.*

*So twice five miles of fertile ground  
With walls and towers were girdled round:  
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,  
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;  
And here were forests ancient as the hills,  
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.*

*But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted  
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!  
A savage place! as holy and enchanted  
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted  
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!*

*And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,  
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,  
A mighty fountain momently was forced:  
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst  
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,  
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:  
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever  
It flung up momently the sacred river.*

*Five miles meandering with a mazy motion  
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,  
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,  
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean:  
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far  
Ancestral voices prophesying war!*

Apparently they didn't make a movie out of the book *Down to a Sunless Sea* written by David Graham in the '70s. It is a book about a planeload of people during the ultimate worldwide disaster. It explores the issues involved in a world without energy, gone mad, that crosses the line into nuclear holocaust. Halfway between New York and London, WW III begins and they have nowhere to land. The destination, New York, has been nuked and all of Europe is in flames.

## The Odyssey – Chapter 21

*...fueling speculation that the President may indeed act to end the Mexican invasion. The aircraft were last seen at Whiteman AFB, yesterday afternoon, but were absent this morning. The Department of Defense has declined comment other than to say that the aircraft were on a regularly scheduled training mission.*

*The B-2 Spirit, made by Northrop Grumman, is a multi-role stealth bomber able to drop conventional and nuclear weapons. A dramatic leap forward in technology, the bomber was a milestone in the US bomber modernization program. The B-2 is the most expensive plane ever built. Estimates for the costs per plane range from \$1.157 billion to \$2.2 billion. Its stealth technology is intended to help it penetrate defenses previously impenetrable by combat aircraft. The original procurement of 135 aircraft was later reduced to 75 in the late 1980s. Finally, President George H. W. Bush reduced the final buy quantity to the 21 already bought in his now famous "New World Order" State of the Union speech, January 1991.*

*Whiteman AFB in Missouri was the B-2's operational base until early 2003, when facilities for the B-2 were built on the joint US/UK military base on the British island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, followed by deployment to Guam in 2005. Facilities for the aircraft have also been built at RAF Fairford in Gloucestershire in the United Kingdom. The aircraft were rebased at Whiteman in August of 2009. Weighing 71,668 kg, each B-2 cost over \$30/g which is just under double its weight in gold. The plane can carry up to 16 Rotary Launcher Assembly mounted B61 or B83 nuclear weapons.*

*The B-2 Spirit is a multi-role bomber capable of delivering both conventional and nuclear munitions. A dramatic leap forward in technology, the bomber represents a major milestone in the US bomber modernization program. The B-2 brings massive firepower to bear, in a short time, anywhere on the globe through previously impenetrable defenses. One plane crashed on Guam reducing the number to twenty. Eighteen of the original 21 were equipped with the Rotary Launcher Assembly. After the crash, a new Rotary Launcher was added to one of the two equipped without to maintain the status quo.*

*Along with the B-52 and B-1B, the B-2 provides the penetrating flexibility and effectiveness inherent in manned bombers. Its low-observable, or "stealth," characteristics give it the unique ability to penetrate an enemy's most sophisticated defenses and threaten its most valued, and heavily defended, targets. Its capability to penetrate air defenses and threaten effective retaliation provide a strong, effective deterrent and combat force well into the 21st century.*

*The revolutionary blending of low-observable technologies with high aerodynamic efficiency and large payload gives the B-2 important advantages over existing bombers. Its low-observability provides it greater freedom of action at high altitudes, thus increasing its range and a better field of view for the aircraft's sensors. Its unrefueled range is approximately 6,000 nautical miles (9,600 kilometers).*



*The B-2's low observability is derived from a combination of reduced infrared, acoustic, electromagnetic, visual and radar signatures. These signatures make it difficult for the sophisticated defensive systems to detect, track and engage the B-2. Many aspects of the low-observability process remain classified; however, the B-2's composite materials, special coatings and flying-wing design all contribute to its "stealthiness."*

*The B-2 has a crew of two pilots, a pilot in the left seat and mission commander in the right, compared to the B-1B's crew of four and the B-52's crew of five.*

*The first B-2 was publicly displayed on Nov. 22, 1988, when it was rolled out of its hangar at Air Force Plant 42, Palmdale, Calif. Its first flight was July 17, 1989. The B-2 Combined Test Force, Air Force Flight Test Center, Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., is responsible for flight testing the engineering, manufacturing and development aircraft on the B-2.*

*Whiteman AFB, Mo., is the only operational base for the B-2. The first aircraft, Spirit of Missouri, was delivered Dec. 17, 1993. Depot maintenance responsibility for the B-2 is performed by Air Force contractor support and is managed at the Oklahoma City Air Logistics Center at Tinker AFB, Okla.*

*The combat effectiveness of the B-2 was proved in Operation Allied Force, where it was responsible for destroying 33 percent of all Serbian targets in the first eight weeks, by flying nonstop to Kosovo from its home base in Missouri and back. In support of Operation Enduring Freedom, the B-2 flew one of its longest missions to date from Whiteman to Afghanistan and back. The B-2 completed its first-ever combat deployment in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, flying 22 sorties from a forward operating location as well as 27 sorties from Whiteman AFB and releasing more than 1.5 million pounds of munitions. The B-2's proven combat performance led to declaration of full operational capability in December 2003.*

*Boeing Military Airplanes Co., Hughes Radar Systems Group, General Electric Aircraft Engine Group and Vought Aircraft Industries, Inc., are key members of the aircraft contractor team.*

"Gunny, Dan. Did you see the announcement on TV?"

"Yep."

"Are you thinking what I'm thinking?"

"Yeah, that reporter has a big fricking mouth."

"No, I was thinking that the B-2 might not be on a training mission."

"Chicken Little finally grew some cajones? No fricking way."

"I've got a pound of gold that says you're wrong, Gunny."

"I don't know; the damned paint is barely dry."

"Is it stocked and ready to go?"

"Hell yeah. If you're right, we'd better finish stacking the hay against the barns and get the animals sheltered."

"We'll take Jim, Julia and their 3 plus John, Mary and their 3. That will leave room for Top and Cindy."

"That's a lot of people for one shelter."

"The kids can double up and I put some cots down there, just in case."

"You call Top and your kids and I call Ray and Hank. It shouldn't take very long to finish stacking the hay and we'll go to ground when we're done."

"How long do you think we have?"

"Dan, I don't know when they left. The minute the first B83 hits, the boomers will start preparing to launch. Those Russkies will have to know it was us; no one else has stealth bombers. Their fly time is probably 30 minutes and they do have some solid fueled rockets. In August 2002, the Strategic Missile Forces chief, Colonel General Nikolai Solovtsov, announced that the military will keep one division of the train-mounted missiles. One division includes up to five trains, each carrying three missiles, and each missile carries 10 warheads. Russia was supposed to scrap all its RT-23 missiles under START II, but Russia withdrew from the treaty in June after the US abrogated the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty."

"I know that they had nearly 50 of the SS-17s with 4 MIRVs each. As of 01Apr05 Kommersant reported that the Strategic Missile Force of Russia had 496 ICBMs, including 226 silo-launched (86 heavy missiles R-36MUTTH and R-36M2 Voevoda, 10 medium missiles UR-100NUTTH, and 40 light missiles RS-12M2 Topol-M) and 270 mobile ground-launched missiles RS-12M Topol."

"After this one, Einstein may be right."

"Clubs?"

"Or, bows and arrows."

"How many warheads do you figure on?"

"Does it matter? If they launch every one they have, maybe 1,500-2,000."

"Use them or lose them, Gunny."

"Call it 2,000. We'd better hurry."

◦

Ancestral voices prophesying war!

Of course, we are an honorable people and would never think of doing some damned fool thing like converting those B-1Bs back to where they could deliver a nuclear payload. On the other hand, START was a long time dead and we did have enough weapons to outfit the planes. 3 bomb bays, each capable of holding 8 whatever's and they were not that bad of a plane, Dale Brown liked them and so did that guy in California, TOM. We had more B-1Bs than B-52s and it might be a use it or lose it scenario. Any aircraft that wasn't in the US had a chance of surviving.

"Hey, Dan, Gunny. I take back every bad thing I ever said about holes in the ground."

◦

How did it end? I can answer that because the closest warhead hit the Garden City Airport. We hit 1,500R, briefly. We stayed in the ground 100 days plus. Because we bought those anti-radiation suits, we were able to get out and feed and water the livestock. We ended up with extra guests, the Sheriff, his Deputies and all of their families. The Sheriff probably knew if you let a fart. He knew more about us than we knew ourselves. He was just covering his six.

We caught them by surprise and took out their C<sup>3</sup>I. They had that thing they called Perimetr, which turned out to be a satellite based backup system for their C<sup>3</sup>I. Bottom line was they were slowed some but not out of business. We got off the first shots and they had their solid fueled missiles airborne before ours got them. Their older liquid fueled missiles never got off the ground and they had scrapped all but one of their Typhoon missile subs. The Russians wiped out everything we'd rebuilt and tried to eliminate every good runway we had. How do you wipe out a dry lakebed? They didn't know either and we got our planes back, most of them anyway. México recalled her troops and the Venezuelan Navy pulled back to their homeports. World War IV ended the 2nd Mexican American War.

That probably shouldn't surprise you, it didn't me. Most of the livestock made it through and even after we were able to let them out, we keep the dairy cows on stored hay and feed. Radiation doesn't affect the milk unless they eat contaminated grass. We had shut down the big wind turbine as a precaution and it started right up after we released the brakes. We'd burned a whole lot of fuel running the generators.

It took us a while to replace the radios, alternators and such in the vehicles but after we

did, they still ran. America was now a third world Country, little better than most of the nations around the world. The good news, if you can call it that, was that there weren't many nuclear weapons left. Most of the weapons that didn't get used were destroyed; Gunny had been pretty close, they dumped everything they had on us and us on them.

Nobody wins a war like that; you just survive, God willing, and move on from there. Russia was the 2nd largest nuclear power on the face of the earth before and we the 1st, and after, we were even – both 3rd world nations. We tried to reach the state Defense Force headquarters to submit our resignations, but there was no Topeka. Garden City lost 80% of its population and Lakin more than 50%. According to the few surviving radio amateurs perhaps 20% of the population had survived the initial attack. Half of them had died in the following 4 months. The US might have 30 million people left. Might!

### Psalm 137

1. By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, we wept, when we remembered Zion.
2. We hanged our harps on the willows in the midst thereof.
3. For there they carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted of us required mirth, saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion.
4. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?
5. If I forget thee O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.
6. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.
7. Remember O Lord, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who said Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.
8. O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.
9. Happy shall he be that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.

◦

Stephen Vincent Benét foretold our future in the year 1937. He called his story, *By the Waters of Babylon*. It is so old, it's in the public domain. Have you ever read it? Read it and wonder...

*The north and the west and the south are good hunting ground, but it is forbidden to go east. It is forbidden to go to any of the Dead Places except to search for metal and then*

*he who touches the metal must be a priest or the son of a priest. Afterwards, both the man and the metal must be purified. These are the rules and the laws; they are well made. It is forbidden to cross the great river and look upon the place that was the Place of the Gods – this is most strictly forbidden. We do not even say its name though we know its name. It is there that spirits live, and demons – it is there that there are the ashes of the Great Burning. These things are forbidden – they have been forbidden since the beginning of time.*

*My father is a priest; I am the son of a priest. I have been in the Dead Places near us, with my father – at first, I was afraid. When my father went into the house to search for the metal, I stood by the door and my heart felt small and weak. It was a dead man's house, a spirit house. It did not have the smell of man, though there were old bones in a corner. But it is not fitting that a priest's son should show fear. I looked at the bones in the shadow and kept my voice still.*

*Then my father came out with the metal – good, strong piece. He looked at me with both eyes but I had not run away. He gave me the metal to hold – I took it and did not die. So he knew that I was truly his son and would be a priest in my time. That was when I was very young – nevertheless, my brothers would not have done it, though they are good hunters. After that, they gave me the good piece of meat and the warm corner of the fire. My father watched over me – he was glad that I should be a priest. But when I boasted or wept without a reason, he punished me more strictly than my brothers. That was right.*

*After a time, I myself was allowed to go into the dead houses and search for metal. So I learned the ways of those houses – and if I saw bones, I was no longer afraid. The bones are light and old – sometimes they will fall into dust if you touch them. But that is a great sin.*

*I was taught the chants and the spells – I was taught how to stop the running of blood from a wound and many secrets. A priest must know many secrets – that was what my father said.*

*If the hunters think we do all things by chants and spells, they may believe so – it does not hurt them. I was taught how to read in the old books and how to make the old writings – that was hard and took a long time. My knowledge made me happy – it was like a fire in my heart. Most of all, I liked to hear of the Old Days and the stories of the gods. I asked myself many questions that I could not answer, but it was good to ask them. At night, I would lie awake and listen to the wind – it seemed to me that it was the voice of the gods as they flew through the air.*

*We are not ignorant like the Forest People – our women spin wool on the wheel, our priests wear a white robe. We do not eat grubs from the trees, we have not forgotten the old writings, although they are hard to understand. Nevertheless, my knowledge and my lack of knowledge burned in me – I wished to know more. When I was a man at last, I came to my father and said, "It is time for me to go on my journey. Give me your leave."*

*He looked at me for a long time, stroking his beard, then he said at last, "Yes. It is time." That night, in the house of the priesthood, I asked for and received purification. My body hurt but my spirit was a cool stone. It was my father himself who questioned me about my dreams.*

*He bade me look into the smoke of the fire and see – I saw and told what I saw. It was what I have always seen – a river, and, beyond it, a great Dead Place and in it the gods walking. I have always thought about that. His eyes were stern when I told him he was no longer my father but a priest. He said, "This is a strong dream."*

*"It is mine," I said, while the smoke waved and my head felt light. They were singing the Star song in the outer chamber and it was like the buzzing of bees in my head.*

*He asked me how the gods were dressed and I told him how they were dressed. We know how they were dressed from the book, but I saw them as if they were before me. When I had finished, he threw the sticks three times and studied them as they fell.*

*"This is a very strong dream," he said. "It may eat you up."*

*"I am not afraid," I said and looked at him with both eyes. My voice sounded thin in my ears but that was because of the smoke.*

*He touched me on the breast and the forehead. He gave me the bow and the three arrows.*

*"Take them," he said. "It is forbidden to travel east. It is forbidden to cross the river. It is forbidden to go to the Place of the Gods. All these things are forbidden. "*

*"All these things are forbidden," I said, but it was my voice that spoke and not my spirit. He looked at me again.*

*"My son," he said. "Once I had young dreams. If your dreams do not eat you up, you may be a great priest. If they eat you, you are still my son. Now go on your journey."*

*I went fasting, as is the law. My body hurt but not my heart. When the dawn came, I was out of sight of the village. I prayed and purified myself, waiting for a sign. The sign was an eagle. It flew east.*

*Sometimes signs are sent by bad spirits. I waited again on the flat rock, fasting, taking no food. I was very still – I could feel the sky above me and the earth beneath. I waited till the sun was beginning to sink. Then three deer passed in the valley going east – they did not mind me or see me. There was a white fawn with them – a very great sign.*

*I followed them, at a distance, waiting for what would happen. My heart was troubled about going east, yet I knew that I must go. My head hummed with my fasting – I did not*

*even see the panther spring upon the white fawn. But, before I knew it, the bow was in my hand. I shouted and the panther lifted his head from the fawn. It is not easy to kill a panther with one arrow but the arrow went through his eye and into his brain. He died as he tried to spring – he rolled over, tearing at the ground. Then I knew I was meant to go east – I knew that was my journey. When the night came, I made my fire and roasted meat.*

*It is eight suns' journey to the east and a man passes by many Dead Places. The Forest People are afraid of them but I am not. Once I made my fire on the edge of a Dead Place at night and, next morning, in the dead house, I found a good knife, little rusted. That was small to what came afterward but it made my heart feel big. Always when I looked for game, it was in front of my arrow, and twice I passed hunting parties of the Forest People without their knowing. So I knew my magic was strong and my journey clean, in spite of the law.*

*Toward the setting of the eighth sun, I came to the banks of the great river. It was half-a-day's journey after I had left the god-road – we do not use the god-roads now for they are falling apart into great blocks of stone, and the forest is safer going. A long way off, I had seen the water through trees but the trees were thick. At last, I came out upon an open place at the top of a cliff. There was the great river below, like a giant in the sun. It is very long, very wide. It could eat all the streams we know and still be thirsty. Its name is Ou-dis-sun, the Sacred, the Long. No man of my tribe had seen it, not even my father, the priest. It was magic and I prayed.*

*Then I raised my eyes and looked south. It was there, the Place of the Gods.*

*How can I tell what it was like – you do not know. It was there, in the red light, and they were too big to be houses. It was there with the red light upon it, mighty and ruined. I knew that in another moment the gods would see me. I covered my eyes with my hands and crept back into the forest.*

*Surely, that was enough to do, and live. Surely it was enough to spend the night upon the cliff. The Forest People themselves do not come near. Yet, all through the night, I knew that I should have to cross the river and walk in the places of the gods, although the gods ate me up. My magic did not help me at all and yet there was a fire in my bowels, a fire in my mind. When the sun rose, I thought, "My journey has been clean. Now I will go home from my journey." But, even as I thought so, I knew I could not. If I went to the Place of the Gods, I would surely die, but, if I did not go, I could never be at peace with my spirit again. It is better to lose one's life than one's spirit, if one is a priest and the son of a priest.*

*Nevertheless, as I made the raft, the tears ran out of my eyes. The Forest People could have killed me without fight, if they had come upon me then, but they did not come.*

*When the raft was made, I said the sayings for the dead and painted myself for death. My heart was cold as a frog and my knees like water, but the burning in my mind would*

*not let me have peace. As I pushed the raft from the shore, I began my death song – I had the right. It was a fine song.*

*"I am John, son of John," I sang. "My people are the Hill People. They are the men.*

*I go into the Dead Places but I am not slain.*

*I take the metal from the Dead Places but I am not blasted.*

*I travel upon the god-roads and am not afraid. E-yah! I have killed the panther, I have killed the fawn!*

*E-yah! I have come to the great river. No man has come there before.*

*It is forbidden to go east, but I have gone, forbidden to go on the great river, but I am there.*

*Open your hearts, you spirits, and hear my song.*

*Now I go to the Place of the Gods, I shall not return.*

*My body is painted for death and my limbs weak, but my heart is big as I go to the Place of the Gods!"*

*All the same, when I came to the Place of the Gods, I was afraid, afraid. The current of the great river is very strong – it gripped my raft with its hands. That was magic, for the river itself is wide and calm. I could feel evil spirits about me, I was swept down the stream. Never have I been so much alone – I tried to think of my knowledge, but it was a squirrel's heap of winter nuts. There was no strength in my knowledge any more and I felt small and naked as a new-hatched bird – alone upon the great river, the servant of the gods.*

*Yet, after a while, my eyes were opened and I saw. I saw both banks of the river – I saw that once there had been god-roads across it, though now they were broken and fallen like broken vines. Very great they were, and wonderful and broken – broken in the time of the Great Burning when the fire fell out of the sky. And always the current took me nearer to the Place of the Gods, and the huge ruins rose before my eyes.*

*I do not know the customs of rivers – we are the People of the Hills. I tried to guide my raft with the pole but it spun around. I thought the river meant to take me past the Place of the Gods and out into the Bitter Water of the legends. I grew angry then – my heart felt strong. I said aloud, "I am a priest and the son of a priest!" The gods heard me – they showed me how to paddle with the pole on one side of the raft. The current changed itself – I drew near to the Place of the Gods.*

*When I was very near, my raft struck and turned over. I can swim in our lakes – I swam*



*to the shore. There was a great spike of rusted metal sticking out into the river – I hauled myself up upon it and sat there, panting. I had saved my bow and two arrows and the knife I found in the Dead Place but that was all. My raft went whirling downstream toward the Bitter Water. I looked after it, and thought if it had trod me under, at least I would be safely dead. Nevertheless, when I had dried my bowstring and restrung it, I walked forward to the Place of the Gods.*

*It felt like ground underfoot; it did not burn me. It is not true what some of the tales say, that the ground there burns forever, for I have been there. Here and there were the marks and stains of the Great Burning, on the ruins, that is true. But they were old marks and old stains. It is not true either, what some of our priests say, that it is an island covered with fogs and enchantments. It is not. It is a great Dead Place – greater than any Dead Place we know. Everywhere in it there are god-roads, though most are cracked and broken. Everywhere there are the ruins of the high towers of the gods.*

*How shall I tell what I saw? I went carefully, my strung bow in my hand, my skin ready for danger. There should have been the wailings of spirits and the shrieks of demons, but there were not. It was very silent and sunny where I had landed – the wind and the rain and the birds that drop seeds had done their work – the grass grew in the cracks of the broken stone. It is a fair island – no wonder the gods built there. If I had come there, a god, I also would have built.*

*How shall I tell what I saw? The towers are not all broken – here and there one still stands, like a great tree in a forest, and the birds nest high. But the towers themselves look blind, for the gods are gone. I saw a fishhawk, catching fish in the river. I saw a little dance of white butterflies over a great heap of broken stones and columns. I went there and looked about me – there was a carved stone with cut – letters, broken in half. I can read letters but I could not understand these. They said UBTREAS. There was also the shattered image of a man or a god. It had been made of white stone and he wore his hair tied back like a woman's. His name was ASHING, as I read on the cracked half of a stone. I thought it wise to pray to ASHING, though I do not know that god.*

*How shall I tell what I saw? There was no smell of man left, on stone or metal. Nor were there many trees in that wilderness of stone. There are many pigeons, nesting and dropping in the towers – the gods must have loved them, or, perhaps, they used them for sacrifices. There are wild cats that roam the god-roads, green-eyed, unafraid of man. At night they wail like demons but they are not demons. The wild dogs are more dangerous, for they hunt in a pack, but them I did not meet till later. Everywhere there are the carved stones, carved with magical numbers or words.*

*I went north – I did not try to hide myself. When a god or a demon saw me, then I would die, but meanwhile I was no longer afraid. My hunger for knowledge burned in me – there was so much that I could not understand. After a while, I knew that my belly was hungry. I could have hunted for my meat, but I did not hunt. It is known that the gods did not hunt as we do – they got their food from enchanted boxes and jars. Sometimes these are still found in the Dead Places – once, when I was a child and foolish, I opened*

*such a jar and tasted it and found the food sweet. But my father found out and punished me for it strictly, for, often, that food is death. Now, though, I had long gone past what was forbidden, and I entered the likeliest towers, looking for the food of the gods.*

*I found it at last in the ruins of a great temple in the mid-city. A mighty temple it must have been, for the roof was painted like the sky at night with its stars – that much I could see, though the colors were faint and dim. It went down into great caves and tunnels – perhaps they kept their slaves there. But when I started to climb down, I heard the squeaking of rats, so I did not go – rats are unclean, and there must have been many tribes of them, from the squeaking. But near there, I found food, in the heart of a ruin, behind a door that still opened. I ate only the fruits from the jars – they had a very sweet taste. There was drink, too, in bottles of glass – the drink of the gods was strong and made my head swim. After I had eaten and drunk, I slept on the top of a stone, my bow at my side.*

*When I woke, the sun was low. Looking down from where I lay, I saw a dog sitting on his haunches. His tongue was hanging out of his mouth; he looked as if he were laughing. He was a big dog, with a gray-brown coat, as big as a wolf. I sprang up and shouted at him but he did not move – he just sat there as if he were laughing. I did not like that. When I reached for a stone to throw, he moved swiftly out of the way of the stone. He was not afraid of me; he looked at me as if I were meat. No doubt I could have killed him with an arrow, but I did not know if there were others. Moreover, night was falling.*

*I looked about me – not far away there was a great, broken god-road, leading north. The towers were high enough, but not so high, and while many of the dead-houses were wrecked, there were some that stood. I went toward this god-road, keeping to the heights of the ruins, while the dog followed. When I had reached the god-road, I saw that there were others behind him. If I had slept later, they would have come upon me asleep and torn out my throat. As it was, they were sure enough of me; they did not hurry. When I went into the dead-house, they kept watch at the entrance – doubtless they thought they would have a fine hunt. But a dog cannot open a door and I knew, from the books, that the gods did not like to live on the ground but on high.*

*I had just found a door I could open when the dogs decided to rush. Ha! They were surprised when I shut the door in their faces – it was a good door, of strong metal. I could hear their foolish baying beyond it but I did not stop to answer them. I was in darkness – I found stairs and climbed. There were many stairs, turning around till my head was dizzy. At the top was another door -- I found the knob and opened it. I was in a long small chamber -- on one side of it was a bronze door that could not be opened, for it had no handle. Perhaps there was a magic word to open it but I did not have the word. I turned to the door in the opposite side of the wall. The lock of it was broken and I opened it and went in.*

*Within, there was a place of great riches. The god who lived there must have been a powerful god. The first room was a small ante-room – I waited there for some time, telling the spirits of the place that I came in peace and not as a robber. When it seemed to*

me that they had had time to hear me, I went on. Ah, what riches! Few, even, of the windows had been broken – it was all as it had been. The great windows that looked over the city had not been broken at all though they were dusty and streaked with many years. There were coverings on the floors, the colors not greatly faded, and the chairs were soft and deep. There were pictures upon the walls, very strange, very wonderful – I remember one of a bunch of flowers in a jar – if you came close to it, you could see nothing but bits of color, but if you stood away from it, the flowers might have been picked yesterday. It made my heart feel strange to look at this picture – and to look at the figure of a bird, in some hard clay, on a table and see it so like our birds. Everywhere there were books and writings, many in tongues that I could not read. The god who lived there must have been a wise god and full of knowledge. I felt I had a right there, as I sought knowledge also.

Nevertheless, it was strange. There was a washing-place but no water – perhaps the gods washed in air. There was a cooking-place but no wood, and though there was a machine to cook food, there was no place to put fire in it. Nor were there candles or lamps – there were things that looked like lamps but they had neither oil nor wick. All these things were magic, but I touched them and lived – the magic had gone out of them. Let me tell one thing to show. In the washing-place, a thing said "Hot" but it was not hot to the touch – another thing said "Cold" but it was not cold. This must have been a strong magic but the magic was gone. I do not understand – they had ways – I wish that I knew.

It was close and dry and dusty in the house of the gods. I have said the magic was gone but that is not true – it had gone from the magic things but it had not gone from the place. I felt the spirits about me, weighing upon me. Nor had I ever slept in a Dead Place before – and yet, tonight, I must sleep there. When I thought of it, my tongue felt dry in my throat, in spite of my wish for knowledge. Almost I would have gone down again and faced the dogs, but I did not.

I had not gone through all the rooms when the darkness fell. When it fell, I went back to the big room looking over the city and made fire. There was a place to make fire and a box with wood in it, though I do not think they cooked there. I wrapped myself in a floor-covering and slept in front of the fire – I was very tired.

Now I tell what is very strong magic. I woke in the midst of the night. When I woke, the fire had gone out and I was cold. It seemed to me that all around me there were whisperings and voices. I closed my eyes to shut them out. Some will say that I slept again, but I do not think that I slept. I could feel the spirits drawing my spirit out of my body as a fish is drawn on a line.

Why should I lie about it? I am a priest and the son of a priest. If there are spirits, as they say, in the small Dead Places near us, what spirits must there not be in that great Place of the Gods? And would not they wish to speak? After such long years? I know that I felt myself drawn as a fish is drawn on a line. I had stepped out of my body – I could see my body asleep in front of the cold fire, but it was not I. I was drawn to look

out upon the city of the gods.

*It should have been dark, for it was night, but it was not dark. Everywhere there were lights – lines of light – circles and blurs of light – ten thousand torches would not have been the same. The sky itself was alight – you could barely see the stars for the glow in the sky. I thought to myself "This is strong magic" and trembled. There was a roaring in my ears like the rushing of rivers. Then my eyes grew used to the light and my ears to the sound. I knew that I was seeing the city as it had been when the gods were alive. That was a sight indeed – yes, that was a sight: I could not have seen it in the body – my body would have died. Everywhere went the gods, on foot and in chariots – there were gods beyond number and counting and their chariots blocked the streets. They had turned night to day for their pleasure-they did not sleep with the sun. The noise of their coming and going was the noise of the many waters. It was magic what they could do – it was magic what they did.*

*I looked out of another window - the great vines of their bridges were mended and god-roads went east and west. Restless, restless, were the gods and always in motion! They burrowed tunnels under rivers – they flew in the air. With unbelievable tools they did giant works – no part of the earth was safe from them, for, if they wished for a thing, they summoned it from the other side of the world. And always, as they labored and rested, as they feasted and made love, there was a drum in their ears – the pulse of the giant city, beating and beating like a man's heart.*

*Were they happy? What is happiness to the gods? They were great, they were mighty, they were wonderful and terrible. As I looked upon them and their magic, I felt like a child – but a little more, it seemed to me, and they would pull down the moon from the sky. I saw them with wisdom beyond wisdom and knowledge beyond knowledge. And yet not all they did was well done – even I could see that – and yet their wisdom could not but grow until all was peace.*

*Then I saw their fate come upon them and that was terrible past speech. It came upon them as they walked the streets of their city. I have been in the fights with the Forest People – I have seen men die. But this was not like that. When gods war with gods, they use weapons we do not know. It was fire falling out of the sky and a mist that poisoned. It was the time of the Great Burning and the Destruction. They ran about like ants in the streets of their city – poor gods, poor gods! Then the towers began to fall. A few escaped – yes, a few. The legends tell it. But, even after the city had become a Dead Place, for many years the poison was still in the ground. I saw it happen, I saw the last of them die. It was darkness over the broken city and I wept.*

*All this, I saw. I saw it as I have told it, though not in the body. When I woke in the morning, I was hungry, but I did not think first of my hunger for my heart was perplexed and confused. I knew the reason for the Dead Places but I did not see why it had happened. It seemed to me it should not have happened, with all the magic they had. I went through the house looking for an answer. There was so much in the house I could not understand – and yet I am a priest and the son of a priest. It was like being on one side*

*of the great river, at night, with no light to show the way.*

*Then I saw the dead god. He was sitting in his chair, by the window, in a room I had not entered before and, for the first moment, I thought that he was alive. Then I saw the skin on the back of his hand – it was like dry leather. The room was shut, hot and dry – no doubt that had kept him as he was. At first I was afraid to approach him – then the fear left me. He was sitting looking out over the city – he was dressed in the clothes of the gods. His age was neither young nor old – I could not tell his age. But there was wisdom in his face and great sadness. You could see that he would have not run away. He had sat at his window, watching his city die – then he himself had died. But it is better to lose one's life than one's spirit – and you could see from the face that his spirit had not been lost. I knew, that, if I touched him, he would fall into dust – and yet, there was something unconquered in the face.*

*That is all of my story, for then I knew he was a man – I knew then that they had been men, neither gods nor demons. It is a great knowledge, hard to tell and believe. They were men – they went a dark road, but they were men. I had no fear after that – I had no fear going home, though twice I fought off the dogs and once I was hunted for two days by the Forest People. When I saw my father again, I prayed and was purified. He touched my lips and my breast, he said, "You went away a boy. You come back a man and a priest." I said, "Father, they were men! I have been in the Place of the Gods and seen it! Now slay me, if it is the law – but still I know they were men."*

*He looked at me out of both eyes. He said, "The law is not always the same shape – you have done what you have done. I could not have done it my time, but you come after me. Tell!"*

*I told and he listened. After that, I wished to tell all the people but he showed me otherwise. He said, "Truth is a hard deer to hunt. If you eat too much truth at once, you may die of the truth. It was not idly that our fathers forbade the Dead Places." He was right – it is better the truth should come little by little. I have learned that, being a priest. Perhaps, in the old days, they ate knowledge too fast.*

*Nevertheless, we make a beginning. It is not for the metal alone we go to the Dead Places now – there are the books and the writings. They are hard to learn. And the magic tools are broken – but we can look at them and wonder. At least, we make a beginning. And, when I am chief priest we shall go beyond the great river. We shall go to the Place of the Gods – the place newyork – not one man but a company. We shall look for the images of the gods and find the god ASHING and the others – the gods Lincoln and Biltmore and Moses. But they were men who built the city, not gods or demons. They were men. I remember the dead man's face. They were men who were here before us. We must build again.*

## The Odyssey – Epilogue

Let me ask you a question, if I may. They didn't invent the atomic bomb until ~1944, so how did he write that story? The author died in 1943, 6 years after he wrote the story. I've been trying to figure that out for 50 years. The first controlled chain reaction occurred on December 2, 1942, in Chicago.

According to June, after WW III they scraped off the topsoil and after Yellowstone, we plowed in the volcanic ash wearing out a plow in the process. It took us 5 years before we had a decent growing season, that time. This time, who knows? I felt defeated, and quite frankly, couldn't see the use of doing it all over. Did we really have a choice? Not if we didn't want to end up like the priest in the short story we didn't. We had a major responsibility or three. Survive, feed our families and above all preserve the knowledge. Knowledge is the one thing they can never, ever take away from you.

That's not to say you can't abandon it, but they can't take it away. The day might come, it was inevitable, when our last working rifle no longer functioned and we ran out of powder and primers. Only then would we be forced to resort to bows and arrows, knives and tomahawks. One day we could lose the capacity to produce electricity, nothing lasts forever.

At the moment, I have more questions than answers. None of us can see that far into the future. Can you?

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